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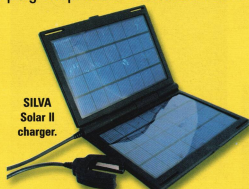


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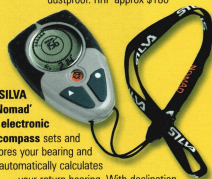
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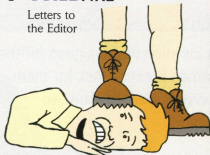
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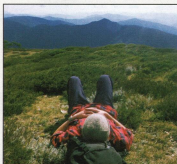


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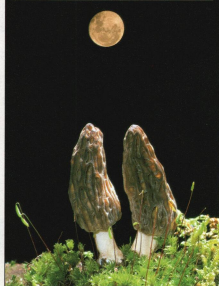
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Cover Wayne Amos drinking in the atmosphere at Lake Rhona, Tasmania. *Glen Turvey*

Wild
AUSTRALIAN OUTDOOR LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE
Established 1981

WARNING

The activities covered in this magazine are dangerous. Undertaking them without proper training, experience, skill, regard to safety, and equipment could result in serious injury or death.



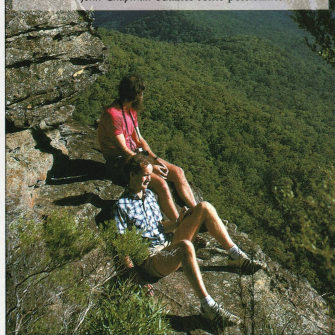
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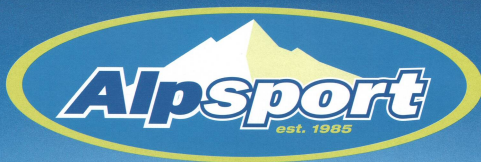
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It's getting hot in here

Climate change: just a little something to think about

CLIMATE CHANGE, GREENHOUSE EFFECT, GLOBAL warming: call it what you will but the topic seems to be everywhere lately. It's popped up in multipage instalments running in prominent positions in the national broadsheets, in prime-time television programmes, and seems to be the favourite talking-point for politicians worldwide. Its time in the sun has come.

I don't recall seeing climate change being covered with this respect and concentration in the mainstream media before. It seems to have always been hidden away in the serious section of the paper, garlanded by butts and ifs, discredited by as many people as support it. Governments have ignored climate change, some scientists have denied or downplayed it, while the general public seem scared by the idea but content to wait until the problem is disproved or solved. Don't get me wrong, I'm not complaining. It's high time that people get serious about the greenhouse effect as, from all reports, the effects will be serious for us.

And 'us' isn't just limited to Australians, although according to scientist Tim Flannery (see profile of him in *Wild* no 94) in his article in the *Age* on 24 September, 'it's difficult to find two nations that have been more severely disadvantaged by climate change than the US and Australia'. If current predictions are correct then the whole ecosystem of the earth will change, with effects including an increased number of extreme weather events, higher temperatures and sea levels, and mass extinctions of species. This will alter the wild places we know and love, with less snow forecast as well as changed coastlines, vegetation, river flows and animal habitats. These effects are documented extensively in books and the media: detailing them here will do little except make this Editorial very long, and readers very depressed! More information is readily available for those who care to look. However, there are varying scenarios put forward from the relatively mild to the extreme, the range of predictions encouraging inaction while we wait to see what unfolds. But as Flannery's article details, we can't afford the luxury of time. According to the *Australian* on 27 July, average global temperatures have risen by 0.6°C in the last decade; Flannery's article reports that temperatures in some regions of Australia have risen by more than 3°C over the 20th century. If we don't act now—choosing instead to wait and see what happens, arguing over which scientists got it right—we may lose the opportunity to prevent the worst predictions becoming reality.

As Flannery says: 'This issue is not like trying to save the forests of Tasmania, where

you have to get a politician to do something on your behalf. This is something you can do yourself.' The last of his three articles in the *Age*, on 27 September, outlined practical steps for cutting the carbon emissions of every person. Although many of the steps suggested are common sense (walking, cycling and taking public transport instead of driving; using energy-efficient white goods), others are not. To me, the most significant aspects of the article were the wide audience it would reach and the relatively simple things it suggested people could do to make a big difference.

The 'climate change check-list' contained the following steps for reducing your emissions by up to 70 per cent (excluding the two above): change to an accredited green-power option; install a solar hot-water system and solar panels; use a AAA rated shower head and energy-efficient light bulbs; check the fuel efficiency of your next car; calculate your carbon footprint; suggest an energy audit at your office; and write to a politician. I'm not suggesting that everyone must (or could) rush in and get the check-list ticked off by next week, although it would be nice. Some steps are not possible for everyone: those who rent can't do solar; for many individuals it's not feasible to do without a car.

What I am suggesting is that people acknowledge that they have some control over climate change, consider their energy consumption, and then exercise that control in a measured way. We all need to think about our energy use, take practical steps to reduce it and take some responsibility for what's to come. Every one of us uses energy, creating carbon emissions, and every one of us can cut the amount of emissions we create. It isn't much use bemoaning government and industry inaction while not doing what we can to prevent climate change.


Just a little something to think about.

One of Wild Publications many commitments to the environment is our sponsorship of the presti-

Megan on the Yit-Ma-Thangs (Niggerheads), Victorian Alps. Guy Sawrey-Cookson

gious \$1000 *Wild* Environmentalist of the Year. It's a pleasure and a privilege for us to be able to honour individuals who have done so much to preserve our wild places on the behalf of so many. This year's winner is Phil Ingamells of the Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA). He led the VNPA's campaign against alpine cattle grazing for the last two and a half years and was instrumental in getting such a great outcome for the Victorian Alps. Although many people contributed to this excellent result, Phil Ingamells brought it all together at the end. Our congratulations, and thanks, go to him.

This issue is the last before *Wild* reaches a huge milestone: we're clocking up our century! A lot has happened during the last twenty-five years and many things have changed, but we're happy to say that the ethos of the magazine is not one of them.

To celebrate we plan to make *Wild* no 100 the best ever: it will be packed with exciting, inspirational material including a new *WildGUIDE* and on sale mid-March 2006. We're frantically working away to ensure that the celebrations are worthy of the event; all you need to do is wait. Our 25th anniversary will be huge—'til then. 

Megan Holbeck
editorial@wild.com.au



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Contributions, preferably well illustrated with slides, are welcome. **Contributors' Guidelines** are available at www.wild.com.au

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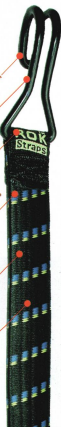
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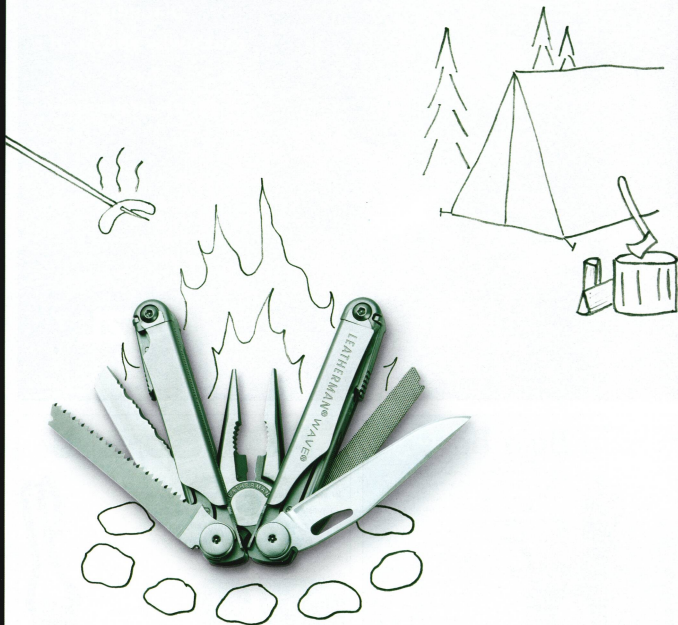
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The bane of editorial staff?

Survey dots and other disappointments

GEAR SURVEYS MUST BE THE BANE OF THE editorial staff because most people will believe that their own particular favourite item has been poorly assessed unless it happens to top a list. Tent surveys might be expected to invite even more comments than usual because of the prime role that tents play in outdoors activities.

Accordingly, I must admit to feeling that my own favourite—the Macpac Eclipse—was somewhat harshly assessed on several points (Gear Survey in *Wild* no 96). In particular, its strongest point—ease of pitch—received a relatively modest two and a half ‘dots’. In my experience, ease of pitch is directly proportional to the number of hoops and the Macpac Eclipse was the only single-hoop model in the survey...

Stability is—as John Chapman states—subjective, so ultimately only wind-tunnel tests can provide an answer... Having camped in exposed situations alongside many other tent designs, I can only suggest that the Eclipse certainly deserves a stability rating nearer the higher end of the subjective scale. It received just one ‘dot’.

I was also amazed how any tent with two entrances could be rated as having worse access than many single-entrance designs. Has John Chapman never camped in a spot where the wind has shifted through 180 degrees?

Ian Dunn
(Subscriber since *Wild* no 1)
Briagolong, Vic

I am curious about the Scarpa SLs rating lower than Mountain Designs badged leather boots (Gear Survey, *Wild* no 98). SLs have stood the test of time in most corners of the globe, are built with the finest leather available in the world, and have one of the best sole units, made on a tried and tested last in Italy! Mountain Designs boots haven't even been around as long as my current SLs have lasted...

Why do I care? I think you've written some wise words but even stating that you do not test each item will not wise up most readers on the finer points of footwear selection. Bottom line: I cannot fathom rating a mass-produced Chinese boot...over a boot as fine as the Scarpa SL.

Dan Lee
Cottesloe, WA

Park management issues stir the coals

Congratulations on your Editorial (*Wild* no 98). Must commend you on all of your statements regarding the cattle grazing. With regard to the great ‘Aussie heritage’, it is like

the European Americans looking upon the slaughter of the Indians as part of their national heritage. Something that should be rectified.

Robin Park
Surrey Hills, Vic

I usually enjoy reading *Wild* at my local library, but the comments of Megan Clinton regarding the fire at Wilsons Promontory in your winter edition (Green Pages, *Wild* no 97) made me very angry.

If she is not an ‘April Fool’ as she claims, she certainly displays almost complete ignorance of the facts concerning this fire. Worse, she is prepared to slander the dedicated and hard-working staff at the Prom...

Firstly, the management plan for Wilsons Promontory National Park...highlights the need for the use of fire in the heath and grassy woodland areas of the park. The fire that escaped was one of a series of ‘ecological burns’, which the staff have successfully conducted...over a number of years.

The fire that reignited on 1 April was lit on 21 March and covered a few hectares of heath just north of Tidal River. It had two purposes—the first was to maintain the biodiversity of the heath lands...The second purpose was ‘asset protection’—to protect the Tidal River resort from a wild fire coming from the north during the busy summer camping period...

It was 11 days after the controlled burn that the fire reignited...Autumn is the most responsible time to light controlled burns, as it is reasonable to expect progressively cooler weather and usually showers. This fire...was followed more than a week later by the driest spell of weather in South Gippsland for this time of year in 50 years...

Of course, it should not have escaped and several enquiries are being conducted... I am certainly not an apologist for every section of DSE...But the staff at the Prom are professionals who live at the Prom and had to deal with the fire approaching their homes and families...

Fire is a normal part of the Australian environment and the real question is not if there will be another wild fire at the Prom, but *when* it will start...Only 13 per cent of the Prom was burnt in April and, in the long term, it will revitalise the area...

Before you criticise the Parks Victoria staff, you should understand how seriously under-resourced they are. Victoria spends only \$26.50 a head on its parks, compared with \$58 a head for New

South Wales, \$57 for Queensland and more than \$70 a head for Tasmania...

Don Jewell
Cannons Creek, Vic

Heroic deeds, passion, inspiration, and a forum for bitching: readers give thanks for Chris Baxter's myriad contributions

It's a pity to read of the retirement/departure of Chris Baxter from the *Rock/Wild* shop. I've been reading the mags since back in the 1980s and have enjoyed many of the articles and images over the years—from the New Zealand mountaineering info in 1986 to more recent baggy-pants dude-smile of bouldering, to a couple of pics that made me go skitouring regardless of the fact that I'm sure I was on the poxiest cross-country skis ever to hit the Main Range. (I even enjoyed the ability to take the piss out of the fact that Chris managed to feature a picture/story from his latest heroic deed in almost every issue!)

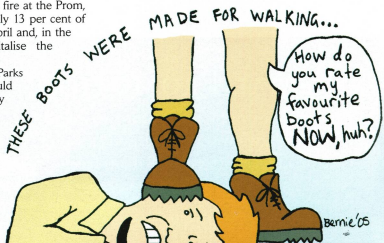
On a serious note: *Rock* and *Wild* have made a contribution to recreation and conservation; provided a forum for whining, bitching and real discussion; showed some of the best of Australia and even inspired some of us to get outside to push our own boundaries. Not a bad effort, CB! Thanks. All the best with the future battles and endeavours.

Andrew Slater
Colorado, USA

I have been thinking about Chris often and am very grateful for the years of time, passion and effort he has put into *Wild*; it is a wonderful testament to him! I hope he is feeling well, although it seems he has been experiencing a very tough time in the last year or so. Wishing him all the best.

Nick Hallebone
Armadale, Vic

Readers' letters are welcome (with sender's full name and address for verification). A selection will be published in this column. Letters of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Write to *Wild*, PO Box 415, Pahrnan, Vic 3181 or email editorial@wild.com.au



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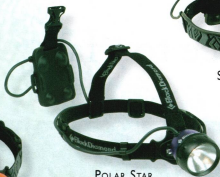
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Cross-country ski season round-up

Finn Marsland, coach of the national team, reports

The official training centre for the Australian cross-country ski team was at Falls Creek, Victoria, this year. The move proved very successful as skiers benefited from training together regularly and working toward common goals. Training conditions were good for most of the season, allowing solid preparation for the northern winter.

Four different skiers won Australian championship events—Mark Raymond (30 kilometre classic), Paul Murray (sprint), Ben Derrick (15 kilometre freestyle) and Ben Sim (ten kilometre classic and ten kilometre freestyle)—highlighting the depth of the men's field. An unprecedented 15 men achieved the minimum standard for selection in the national team. The women's field did not boast the same depth at the senior level but the quality was unquestionable, with Clare-Louise Brumley dominating all the distance events and Esther Bottomley untouchable in the sprints.

Competition was tight across all the junior classes. Fourteen skiers were selected for the 2005–06 junior team including six under the age of 16: Alex Almoukov, Callum Watson and d'Arcy Baxter from New South Wales; and Chris Cook, Juliette Booth and Georgia Merritt from Victoria. It may be possible to field both junior men's and women's relay teams at the World Junior Championships—incredible considering that the last time a junior men's team competed was in 1995 and we have never entered a junior women's team.



Kangaroo Hoppet runner-up Raul Olle (left), winner Ben Sim and third placed Françoise Soulie (France) look happy, if a little unsure of what to do with their flowers! Mike Pischetsrieder

The pinnacle of the season was the Kangaroo Hoppet at Falls Creek on 27 August. Around 1100 participants from 22 nations competed in the event's three race distances of 42 kilometres, 21 kilometres and seven kilometres. Ben Sim won the main event from Estonian long-distance champion Raul Olle, in the process becoming the first junior skier to win a World Hoppet race. Clare-Louise Brumley won the women's Hoppet for the second year in a row.

The team's attention is now firmly fixed on the World Cup results needed to qualify for the 2006 Winter Olympics in Torino.

The opening race of the World Cup season was on 22 October in Dusseldorf, Germany, where artificial snow was trucked on to an 800 metre sprint course on the banks of the Rhine. World Cup selection events at seven locations across Europe and the USA follow, before the Winter Olympics begin on 10 February 2006. It will be an expensive campaign, with each athlete spending between \$8000 and \$12 000 of their own money to cover travel and living expenses.

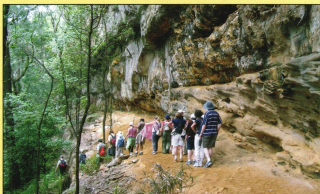
Cross-country skiing news and results from the northern winter can be found at www.hoppet.com.au/xc

The 2005 Great Australian Bushwalk

Andrew Cox gives details about this annual event

Now in its third year, the Great Australian Bushwalk on 16 October was a resounding success. Across the country 2500 people participated in 94 separate walks, with 700 walkers enjoying several different walks in the Australian Capital Territory alone. Walkers in the Oxley Wild Rivers National Park in the northern tablelands of NSW were even greeted by a string quartet upon completion of their stroll! Western Australian walkers were given the chance to complete a section of the Bibbulmun Track, while in north-west Tasmania the ancient myrtles of the Blue Tiers were on display. Early morning walkers in Central Australia participated in walks along the Larapinta Track at Simpsons Gap.

The Great Australian Bushwalk aims to promote environmental protection and minimum-impact principles and is hosted by National Parks Associations in each State, along with various bushwalking clubs. For more information about the walks, or to register for the 2006 Great Australian Bushwalk (to be held in May), go to www.greataustralianbushwalk.org.au



'Great Australian Bushwalkers' on the NSW central coast moseyed through Katandra Reserve near Erina. Michael Peake

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GRIT AND DETERMINATION

The Sydney Trailwalker, by Peter Hadfield

Four hundred teams lined up for the grueling 48-hour challenge of the Sydney Trailwalker this year including teams from Singapore, Hong Kong and New Zealand, as well as numerous interstate entries. They gathered at Hunters Hill on 26 August to trek the 100 kilometre track, finishing at Frenchs Forest in Ararat Reserve.

The field again contained many top running-teams, with more than 40 of them finishing the 100 kilometre event in less than 20 hours. These included the Asia Miles Cosmo Boys from Hong Kong (two-time Hong Kong Trailwalker winners), a mixed team of New Zealand's top adventure racers called Oxfam Trailwalker NZ, Striderama from the Sydney Striders Running Club and ACT Run (ACT Mountain Running Association).

The early pace was cracking. At the 33 kilometre mark Oxfam Trailwalker NZ had run a blistering time of three and a half hours, with only eight minutes separating the top five teams. By the 75 kilometre mark it had become a desperate tussle between ACT Run and the Asia Miles Cosmo Boys for line honours. These teams were within ten minutes of each other for much of the event and at the seventh checkpoint (after

92 kilometres) ACT Run led by only four minutes. However, they blew their opponents away in the last eight kilometres, finishing in a race record of 11 hours and 59 minutes—an average speed of 8.9 kilometres an hour for the entire event! The top mixed team was Big Canoes 2, crossing the line in 12 hours and 54 minutes, and the first wo-



Left, the members of ACT Run celebrate their record-breaking win. Above, Jonathan Blake (left), David Baldwin, Trevor Jacobs and Tim Sawkins before things got even messier. Andrew Introna



men's team was The Supremes in 19 hours, 41 minutes.

Some teams really showed grit and determination: Sassy Sixty Something Sheilas—four women all over the age of 60—finished in just less than 27 hours, while Will

Elnick, a leg-amputee athlete with team Milie, completed the entire event on crutches in a time of 25 hours.

Melbourne Trailwalker will be held from 7–9 April 2006. For details visit www.oxfam.org.au/trailwalker/melbourne

Wild Diary

Wild Diary listings provide information about rucksack-sports events and instruction courses run by non-commercial organisations. Send items for publication to the Editor, Wild, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181. Email editorial@wild.com.au

December

- 9–11 Coast to Kosciuszko **BR** NSW www.coolrunning.com.au
- 10 Tasmanian Slalom and Wildwater Championships **C** Tas www.tas.canoe.org.au
- 11 Black Mountain Challenge **BR** ACT www.coolrunning.com.au
- 11 CCC Race and Christmas Party **C** NSW www.nswcanoe.org.au
- 18 Tour de Mountain **ACT** mick.cortis@twizards.com.au
- 27–31 RC Murray Marathon **C** Vic (03) 8327 7706

January 2006

- 1 Fat Ass Run **BR** NSW www.coolrunning.com.au
- 4–18 Australian White-water Championships **C** Tas www.tas.canoe.org.au
- 7 BC Hare and Hound Handicap **C** Qld www.brisbane.canoe.org.au
- 7–8 Australian Wildwater Selection Event 1 **C** Tas www.tas.canoe.org.au
- 8 Mt Bogong to Mt Hotham Rerootop Run **BR** Vic www.coolrunning.com.au

February

- 4 Cradle Mountain Run **BR** Tas sue.drake@trump.net.au
- 4 Paddlogaine **C** Vic www.vra.rogaine.asn.au
- 4–5 Paddle Polar **C** NSW www.wildhorizons.com.au

- 11–12 Upside Down 12 hr **R** WA www.vra.rogaine.asn.au
- 19 Moonshot Dam Run **BR** Vic www.coolrunning.com.au
- 25–26 Yarra Descent **C** Vic www.canoevic.org.au
- 26 Metrogaine 6 hr **R** NSW www.nswrogaining.org

March

- 4–5 2 x 6 hr **R** Vic www.vra.rogaine.asn.au
- 5 Paddy Pallin 6 hr **R** ACT www.act.rogaine.asn.au
- 11 Upside Down 8 hr **R** Qld www.qldrogaine.asn.au
- 11 Autumn 6 hr **R** WA www.vra.rogaine.asn.au
- 12 Multisport Rogaine 6/12 hr **M** R www.qldrogaine.asn.au
- 25 Metrogaine **R** SA www.sa.rogaine.asn.au

April

- 7–9 Trailwalker Melbourne **BR** Vic www.oxfam.org.au/trailwalker
- 8 12 hr **R** Vic www.vra.rogaine.asn.au
- 8 Autumn 12 hr **R** WA www.vra.rogaine.asn.au
- 8–9 State Championship 24 hr **R** NSW www.nswrogaining.org
- 14–16 Australian Marathon Canoe/Kayak Championships **C** SA www.sa.canoe.org.au
- 14–17 Three Peaks Race **M** Tas www.threepicks.org.au
- 22 6/12 hr **R** SA www.sa.rogaine.asn.au
- 29–30 6/12/24 hr **R** N Qld www.qldrogaine.asn.au

May

- 7 Bigaine 6 hr **R** Qld www.qldrogaine.asn.au
- 13–14 Australian Championships **R** Vic www.vra.rogaine.asn.au

June

- 10 8 hr **R** Qld www.qldrogaine.asn.au
- 10–11 Schools 2 x 6 hr **R** Vic www.vra.rogaine.asn.au
- 10–11 Winter 24 hr **R** WA www.vra.rogaine.asn.au
- 10–12 Murray 100/200/Relay **C** SA www.mcc.canoe.org.au
- 18 Paddy Pallin 6 hr **R** NSW www.nswrogaining.org

July

- 8 8 hr **R** Vic www.vra.rogaine.asn.au
- 8–9 State Championship 8/24 hr **R** ACT www.act.rogaine.asn.au
- 8–9 State Championships 6/15/24 hr **R** Qld www.qldrogaine.asn.au
- 8–9 State Championship 24 hr **R** SA www.sa.rogaine.asn.au
- 15 6/12 hr **R** N Qld www.qldrogaine.asn.au

August

- 5–6 State Championship 24 hr **R** WA www.vra.rogaine.asn.au
- 19 6/12 hr **R** NSW www.nswrogaining.org

Activities: B bushwalking, BR bush running, C canoeing, M multisports, R rogaining **Organisations:** BC Brisbane Canoeing CCCC Central Coast Canoe Club RC Red Cross **Rogaining events** are organised by the State rogaining associations **Canoeing events** are organised by the State canoeing associations unless otherwise stated

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Hammer and tongs at Wilsons Prom

Preparations and reparations

National Parks staff and contractors at Wilsons Promontory have been busy preparing for the summer onslaught. All areas that were closed due to the April fires reopened on 17 September except the Waterloo Track and Loo-ern Boardwalk. Park staff expected these tracks to be open for the Melbourne

Cup weekend in November. There was consultation with indigenous groups, tourism operators and stakeholders over Waterloo Track to ensure that the track realignment met modern track standards and that culturally significant sites were taken into account. Some new sections were re-routed to de-

crease erosion and avoid environmentally sensitive areas. The toilet block at Tidal River was due to be replaced; it should be finished by mid-December. Renovations to camp-site surfaces have been postponed until autumn 2006 but the Tidal River shop renovations were complete.

SCROGGIN

Caver bottoms out

Stephen Bunton reports that Alan Warild became the first Australian to bottom a two kilometre deep cave when he reached the new deepest point of Voronia Cave, Abkhazia, the world's deepest cave (see *Wild* no 96 for more details). He was a member of an international expedition that resurveyed the cave and confirmed the depth at 2050 metres.

Adventure Activity Standards update

According to Adventure Victoria, State representative bodies Tasmanian Outdoor Recreation and Recreation South Australia are looking with interest at Victoria's experience with the Adventure Activity Standards (AAS) (see *Wild* no 98). They are considering implementing versions of the AAS, with the SA Minister for Sport suggesting that it would form the basis of a national 'Code of Conduct'.

Know your State

Victorian Coastal Council member Lynn Murrell recently walked the 1850 kilometre Victorian coastline, beginning at the SA border on 4 January and winding up at the NSW border on 16 April. In doing so he hoped to increase awareness of coastal issues and promote the development of a linked and integrated walking track and accompanying map, with information on camping grounds, availability of water and supplies. Apart from the occasional diversion such as swollen creeks, impassable cliffs and waist-deep bogs, the trip was largely incident free.

Legendary Kiwi dies

Himalayan and Antarctic adventurer and climber Murray Roland Ellis died earlier this year aged 80. A member of the successful expedition to the South Pole with Edmund Hillary in 1957-58, he kept the Ferguson tractor chugging until they reached the pole—the first vehicles to do so. Later a managing director of Arthur Ellis, Fairydown's parent company, the New Zealander was also a member of the Himalayan Trust, a charity group founded by Hillary to provide water and build schools for the Nepalese in the Mt Everest region.



The Canberra Team practise for the Sled Dog Challenge at Dinner Plain, Victoria. Held on 13-14 August, more than 350 dogs and 75 'mushers' entered from all around Australia. Brett Hadden

Alpine hut to be rebuilt

The VicWalk newsletter reports that Ropers Hut in the Bogong area is the only hut due to be replaced at this stage, this decision largely hinging on its value as an alpine refuge. Huts that have already been rebuilt are Mt Benambra, Bogong Aqueduct, McNamaras, Federation and Michell. Bon Accord hut is unlikely to be rebuilt.

It's not so lonely at the top

Lonely Planet founders Tony and Maureen Wheeler have been awarded the Travel Journalism Lifetime Achievement Award by the American University's School of Communication and the Society of American Travel Writers. The award recognised 'the integrity and high standards' of the Wheelers' publications. Lonely Planet is the world's largest independent guidebook publisher, with over 650 titles in print.

Seeing the Forests and the Trees

David Tatnall, a Melbourne-based nature photographer, has this exhibition running

until 29 January at the Monash Gallery of Art. Tatnall is a passionate conservationist and *Wild* contributor renowned for his landscape photography. Visit www.mga.org.au for more information.

Bibbulmun Track facts

There has been considerable interest in the Bibbulmun Track following the article in *Wild* no 98. Readers can find more information at www.bibbulmuntrack.org.au or by phoning the not-for-profit Bibbulmun Track Foundation on (08) 9321 0649.

Cobberas get friendly

A volunteer group passionate about the Cobberas has begun work with National Park authorities to monitor the environment, maintain tracks, and eradicate weeds and feral animals in the area. Would-be Cobberites can get more information by visiting www.eastgippsland.com/cobberas

Readers' contributions to this department, including high-resolution digital photos or colour slides, are welcome. Items of less than 200 words are more likely to be published. Send them to *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181 or email editorial@wild.com.au

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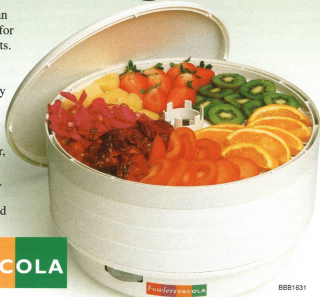
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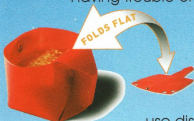
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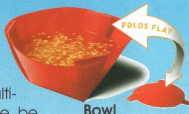
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THE MOUNTAIN in my backyard

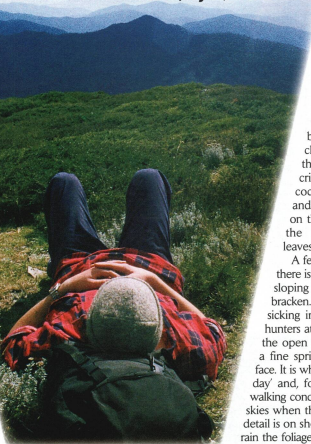
A fresh summit renews a familiar view, by **Quentin Chester**

IN THE END IT WAS THE mist that did it. You see, for months now I've been staring at the mountain in my backyard. It's there every morning, gazing down at me from on high, and in the evening it's the last thing to catch the setting sun. I've watched westerly gales crash against the summit and seen lightning split the skies above. But it's the mist that always gets to me; when low clouds drift across the slopes I'm mesmerised. Until now I've resisted this tantalising dance of veils. However, as the mist curls into the trees I can bear it no longer. I begin to walk.

As mountains go, it's no giant. The summit barely clears 500 metres and it's definitely not the kind of eminence to attract 'baggers' or grace a calendar. But from where I sit—in my living-room—it's enough of a peak to capture my attention. Even peak may be a bit strong; in fact, I've seen muffsins with sharper tops. Yet in profile it does have a rough symmetry and some of the gullies could be considered 'steepish'. Not only that, there are even a few jagged sandstone outcrops on the western face.

Being so near it's a wonder it has taken me a year and a half to take a closer look. I was torn, I guess. There has been a mountain of other things to do: a new house and renovations piled on top of the daily muddle of work and family. Part of me also preferred to keep my distance; I wanted to be free with my own figments of what was across the valley. As a wary type, there was concern that the reality wouldn't match the daydreams. Over the months all manner of excuses have been heaping up. Talk about making mountains out of molehills!

Now it is time to turn my back on such dawdling. I'm on my way, no more pretences; no permission required. I grab my jacket, lock the front door and hit the road. At this stage it is perhaps necessary to mention that, although the mountain can be 'seen' as part of the backyard, it's not on our property. To get to it I have to walk to the end of the street and across the creek. Then there's the small matter of crossing four lanes of traffic, which happens to be the road to Melbourne. I've grown accustomed to having a freeway close by. Indeed, it feels



Your local patch of bush doesn't have to be as impressive as this one to allow an escape from the weight of the world. This photo taken on the Twins, the Victorian Alps. Eli Greig

consoling that nature goes merrily about its business as trucks rumble past day and night. Within metres of the safety rail there are dainty native orchids and honey-eaters fluttering among the golden wattles.

Even better is the fact that the freeway has a pedestrian underpass. As cars drum overhead I toddle through the tunnel. So what if my destination has an altitude problem? The salient thing at this moment is that I'm down here heading for my misty mountain and they're up there, stuck grim-faced behind the wheel. All that keeps us apart is a thin chain-link fence on the road embankment. Yet the demarcation feels much greater. You see, I'm travelling in another world.

It's the forest that makes this micro-cosmos. The valley is the bastion of the mountain

gum—in a State with so much stunted mallee scrub it's a humbling joy to wander in the company of 40 metre giants. I'm partial to their towering white trunks and high branches groping into the clouds. As I begin my climb through the forest there are crows from yellow-tailed black cockatoos somewhere above and fat drops of water tap me on the shoulder as they fall from the canopy of mist-collecting leaves.

A few hundred metres further on there is a clearing, a tussock meadow sloping down to a dam fringed by bracken. Red-browed finches are fossicking in the wet grass like bargain hunters at a specials table. Out here in the open the air is smooth, with only a fine spritz of moisture brushing my face. It is what the Scots would call a 'soft day' and, for me, these are unbeatable walking conditions. Who cares about grey skies when the light is so calm and every detail is on show? After months of soaking rain the foliage colours are deep and glossy, and the air has a lush, fruity aroma. As the years go by I'm ever more grateful for these agreeably dismal days, a blessed time before the glare of the hard summer sun and the drying north winds.

The track steepens and narrows. Suddenly the mountain gums give way to a shaded woodland of stringybark. The trees are so evenly sized and spaced that they create a rhythmic landscape, a giddyng colonnade that teases the eye as you advance up the ridge. I'm warming to my task now—blood pumping, legs stretching forward, eyes darting all around. Time to unzip the jacket. As a friend of mine says: 'it's not a bushwalk until you shed a couple of layers.'

Off in the distance I hear a white-throated treecreeper. The piercing, insistent piping splits the stillness of the gully. Then I see the bird itself, a compact, purposeful character climbing in a spiral track up a stringybark, prodding the surface with its curved bill. There are xanthorrhoeas, wattles in flower and eccentric native-cherry trees with dainty, tasselled foliage and bent limbs surfaced with bark like puckered skin. In the midst of this splendour I'm absorbed by the minutiae of pacing myself, judging each step as I

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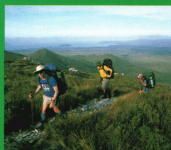
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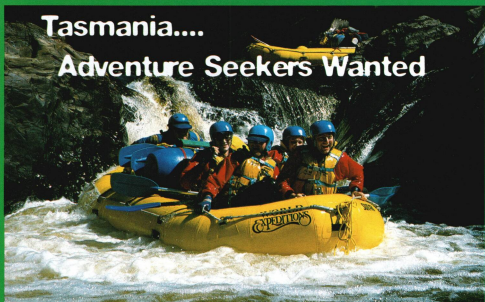
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dodge puddles and loose stones. Walking is such an ordinary thing, yet that's hardly a reason not to try to do it well. And when the movements fall into place—when you can stride along at a good clip, while still being a faithful witness to your surroundings—it's as satisfying as anything we do in the upright position.

The track turns out of a gully and contours to the crown of the mountain. There are glimpses back across the valley now. Through gaps in the mist I spot the great stand of exotic trees planted by the Wolastons 100 years ago. A bit to the east I see our neighbour's big oaks coming into leaf. And above these there is the new roofline of our house. It looks bigger that I imagined and if I had a pair of binoculars I could probably look through the French doors and see the armchair where I sit and gaze up at this place. It's a peculiar feeling looking down on my life, my other little summit.

There's no doubt that bushwalking is an escape from the weight of the world, a chance to venture far and find some clarity in the most exotic places on offer. Thanks to a steady diet of open space it seems that I've become unfit for suburbia and after only a few hours any city feels irksome. By comparison our place here in the hills has the scrappy air of a camp-site. We surround ourselves with pictures of nature, maps and books about the bush. Each day begins with time outside in the presence of trees. Rough weather and the night sky exert a powerful attraction. The smell of the wood fire is unusually stirring. I wake with the birds and look to the sky. And my antidote for almost anything is to be outdoors, pacing the ground, trying to lose myself, so the business of finding becomes another way of seeing.

The summit is in sight now and the track skirts over the prow of outcrops mottled with lichen and moss. Corraes nestle in hollows between the rocks. There's a steep drop below and I hang on tightly to the ribs of wet sandstone. The views to the west are obscured by a bank of low cloud. I can see the freeway but the houses along the ridge and the higher summits beyond are conveniently tucked under the fog blanket. That's the other thing about this misty weather: every day the outlook is different. For now, it feels like I'm the king of this castle.

A week ago I was looking at these hills from out at sea. Two companions and I were sailing back to Adelaide, across the St Vincent Gulf. Both these blokes were 25 years my senior and a bit tottery in a lumpy sea, so I did the lion's share of working the sails. Even so, there was time aplenty to study the horizon. It was a day of broken cloud and light squalls. Of course, we had a compass and a simple bearing—due east—on which to sail. But I found myself constantly peering through the distant haze to try to determine the lie of the land.

With each hour the profile of the hills became clearer. The summit of Mt Lofty was an obvious landmark, yet for me the real highlight was the smooth outline of Brown Hill to the south. This was the up-

land of my youth, a bare ramp of a hill that stood across the valley from my childhood home. It served as a constant reference in the changeability of weather and seasons, and it remains a memorial for my earlier footloose life when I wandered the bush alone and first realised what it was like to stop the world and swim in the moment.

As much as I like to be remote, there's a lot to be said for having a home patch. In a world going madder every day it does no harm to think local, to turn to a place of

Quentin Chester

After 30 years of walking and climbing, Quentin Chester is still tapping into the call of the wild. He has written widely about his travels and tribulations, including books on Kakadu and the Kimberley, as well as many stories about his fervour for the Flinders Ranges. qchester@senet.com.au



trees and birds and sky where you can unwind at will. The mountain in my backyard may not cut it in the big league; nevertheless it is always there as a steady presence. Better still, it's an enduring reminder of change. The light shifts, a cloud passes and the vision is new again. Like Cezanne's many views of Mont Sainte-Victoire, the changes entice the mind. We might crave certainty but life and how we see it keep bouncing us around. The view across our valley suggests to me both the promise of escape and the need to keep going. It's a reminder of the wobbly bridge between doing what I have to do and looking after who I've become.

By the time I get to the top the mist has closed in, so the summit experience is not exactly triumphant. There aren't any vistas or glimpses of the pair of wedge-tailed eagles I've recently seen cruising the skies. It's just me, the dripping trees and a tribe of blue wrens scuttling among the bushes. Still, by any measure I'm not doing badly. The morning headache has gone, all joints are operational, anxieties have eased and I'm breathing much easier. I'm ready to go again.

The track down the mountain takes several switchbacks across a series of dark gullies. I gallop off downhill, losing myself in the footwork needed to avoid slick stones and exposed roots, to dodge puddles and drooping branches. I plunge back into the mountain-gum forest and head for the hum of the freeway and the tunnel that leads to home—my other home.

Quentin Chester

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Stolen Walks

Day-trips into proper wilderness from the city and still back in time for dinner? *Graham Wootton* gives some ideas for walks from Hobart and Sydney

MOST AUSTRALIANS HAVE A PARTICULAR AFFINITY WITH AND AFFECTION FOR THE bush. From this has evolved the uniquely Australian form of recreational walking that we all know as bushwalking. However, although we love the bush, most bushwalkers live and work in the capital cities. This has led to a degree of alienation from the bush in everyday life. We tend to regard it as separate and remote, a place to escape to on weekends and holidays but not part of our normal environment. Our trips to the bush are usually planned well ahead, reinforcing the separation between the bush and our 'normal' life. But need this be so?

With an early start and careful time management, many worthwhile bushwalks can be done as day-trips from the heart of the capital cities and you can still be home in time for dinner. I'm not just talking about the easy options such as Sydney's Royal National Park, the Dandenongs from Melbourne or Mt Wellington from Hobart. I am thinking more of the really spectacular, inspiring destinations that you dream of on a beautiful day when you're stuck in the office, destinations such as the Grose wilderness in the Blue Mountains, Mt Anne or Mt Pictou in South-west Tasmania. The opportunity for impromptu trips to such destinations has never been greater, with many people now having more flexible working hours or being able to take annual leave. A significant bonus is that you can go when the weather is ideal rather than having to accept the weather as it comes.

Such walks, arranged within tight time-constraints, seem to have an added dimension to them; a slight feeling of self-indulgence combined with the satisfaction of being able to reach out so far into the wilderness and still integrate the experience into your day-to-day life. I like to think of these trips as 'stolen walks'—they make the most of any opportunity to enjoy the bush, despite time-limits. It is even possible to combine business and pleasure: if you have to travel to an interstate destination for work, consider extending the trip by an extra day. One of my early stolen walks fitted into this category, a day-trip to climb Mt Barney while I was working in Casino in northern New South Wales in 1967. This trip combined most of the essentials of a good stolen walk: an early start; perfect weather; a formidable and inspiring destination and, most important of all, being back in time for a three-course dinner in the evening.

Some practical considerations

Stolen walks require a reasonable level of experience and preparation if they are to be undertaken successfully and enjoyably. In particular:

- You need to know the pace of your party so that you can estimate walking times within about ten per cent. 'Late-back walks' can't be counted as stolen walks.
- It is good to have at least one person who has walked the route before. However, this isn't essential if you have good track notes and know your pace relative to other trip times by the author.
- Have a day pack ready at home with all the basic requirements so you can't give yourself the excuse, 'It would be great to go tomorrow but I haven't even packed yet'.

Walkers enjoy the view from Mt Solitary back to Castle Head, the Blue Mountains. All uncredited photos by the author



- Practice good time management. Set a steady pace that can be maintained for at least an hour between rest stops and don't lose track of the time while you are resting. However, still enjoy the trip and give yourself time to appreciate the views and take some photographs. There will always be the doubters who will be reluctant to accept that you actually got there!
- For the success of a trip the transport arrangements to and from the start of the walk are probably only second in importance to knowing your pace. In the smaller capital cities where traffic conges-

just arranged a date with his girlfriend on Saturday evening and he had to be back in Springwood by 6 pm, come hell or high water. Advice I received from more experienced walkers in the Sydney University Bushwalking Club was not encouraging. However, I went out on a limb and guaranteed my friend we would be back in time, ever mindful of the consequences if we weren't.

We caught the first train from Springwood to Leura on the Saturday morning, walked out along the Mt Hay fire track and, after descending the canyon, sat alongside a very beautiful pool below the main waterfall eating Iced Vo Vo biscuits for lunch. Then a

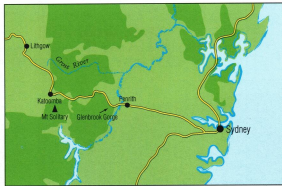
A short catalogue of stolen walks

My experience with stolen walks is limited mainly to trips from Sydney and Hobart and I will confine myself to these. However, I am sure that similar opportunities exist in most other capital cities and major population centres. It just takes a little imagination, a little planning and the initiative to get going.

The following notes are not meant as route guides to the particular areas mentioned but rather as an indication of what can be achieved, and as inspiration.

Walks from Sydney

Although there is much pleasant bushland in and around Sydney, you really need to travel to the Blue Mountains for 'the real thing'. Most trips will entail a couple of hours' driving each way but good train services provide an excellent alternative. The following is a short list of walks in the more accessible areas of the Blue Mountains but undoubtedly there are many other possibilities.



Stealing a walk through the Blue Gum Forest, 'the Mecca of Sydney bushwalkers'. David Noble

tion is minimal, car transport is the obvious way to go. However, in the larger capital cities it is all too easy to end up spending most of your day in traffic rather than walking. A very early start can help considerably but if you have to be home in time for dinner you may still get caught up in the afternoon peak-hour rush. In these situations, train transport has many advantages with quicker travel and approximate start and finish times for the trip. Of course, the starting points for walks are not always near railway stations. However, a combination of train and taxi or bicycle transport can often prove to be very time- and cost-effective. Most State rail systems allow you to take your bicycle on the train. Bicycles can be hidden in the bush near the start of the walk, chained to a tree for extra security.

I still remember well what I consider my first stolen walk. It was early 1964 and I was an impecunious university student who had just discovered the wonders of canyoning. My friend Peter and I had plans to do Mt Hay Canyon on Saturday when cupid intervened. Peter announced that he had

spell of rock hopping down to the Grose River, up the river to Blue Gum Forest and up Perrys Lookdown. Our plan was to walk from there to the first house we encountered and call a taxi to take us into Blackheath. It worked like a charm and we caught the 5 pm train from Blackheath with about ten minutes to spare. Certainly a reasonable risk for a date but probably not if you were getting married that evening!

Some safety aspects

By their very nature, impromptu trips usually have small party numbers and you may often end up walking solo. There is nothing essentially wrong with this provided you acknowledge the risks and manage them properly. If you are going solo it is even more desirable to have previous experience of the route. However, the critical thing is that you leave full details of your proposed route at home and *stick rigorously to that route*. This is particularly important in Tasmania. The carrying of EPIRBs (emergency distress beacons) greatly increases safety in such situations—anyone walking solo in Tasmania or other remote areas of Australia should have one.

Lower Grose wilderness

Exploration of the lower Grose River dates back to the early 1800s but the area still remains a true wilderness, with much day-walk potential. The easiest access is along Faulconbridge and Springwood ridges. These are blocked to cars but bicycles are allowed, providing a quick way of getting to the start of the real walking at the end of the fire tracks. A track from near Faulconbridge Point leads down to the Grose River and another from the end of Springwood ridge leads to the summit of Grose Head South.

Glenbrook Gorge

If you only have a short day available, consider Glenbrook Gorge. It's certainly not a wilderness and the walk from Glenbrook Station takes less than an hour. However, it is a real gorge with spectacular sandstone cliffs, great pools for swimming and Liloing and excellent scope for rockclimbing and abseiling. If you leave Central Station by 7 am you can sample all the above delights and still arrive back in Sydney around 3 pm if necessary.

Mt Solitary

Mt Solitary is probably one of the most observed mountains in Australia, lying directly

Melbourne's 'Wilderness' Walks

John Chapman outlines some possibilities

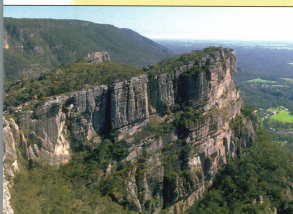
The scenery around Melbourne is perhaps not as spectacular as that around other capital cities. However, while less dramatic, it has the widest variation of walking experiences. Each walking region has its own unique character. Except for the Dandenongs, most walking areas aren't accessible by public transport; private transport is necessary to reach all the following destinations.

Cathedral Range

The rugged Cathedral Range is a popular walking area north-east of Melbourne. It has the most challenging walking available near Melbourne and is a must for every keen walker. The range is dominated by huge slabs of grey shale and topped with a narrow, rocky crest. The open forest also makes it easy to spot lyrebirds. With an early start it is possible to complete a full traverse of the range in one day, returning to the car by vehicle tracks. There is a network of tracks and, if attempting shorter walks, it is possible to do something different on each visit.

Cape Woolamai

Phillip Island is a large island lying at the entrance to Westernport Bay to the south-east of



Melbourne. Its southern coastline is quite jagged with rocky points, such as Cape Woolamai, jutting out into Bass Strait. The south-eastern end of the island provides the best walking with many sea-cliffs and excellent views. A circuit of the cape takes around three and a half hours but check the tides carefully as one section of the walk is on a beach that is impassable at high tide. There is plenty of development on Phillip Island, and at nearby San Remo, so this walk does not have a wilderness feel. However, on a stormy day you will discover that the cape is quite exposed—you may certainly feel closer to nature than on any other one-day walks.

You Yangs

Rising above the flat basalt plains south-west of Melbourne, these granite peaks provide the best grandstand view of Port Phillip Bay and the nearby cities of Melbourne and Geelong. Flinders Peak is the highest of these and there is a track to the top with another circling the peak. A stolen afternoon is all that is needed for a rewarding trip to this interesting little



Left, the ultimate stolen walk from Melbourne is a visit to the Wonderland Range, the Grampians. John Chapman. **Above**, walkers follow the rocky crest of the Cathedral Range towards Sugarloaf Peak. Glenn van der Knijff

range. The views are excellent and the vegetation is very different as a weed has taken over much of the forest, illustrating some of the many problems with introduced species. In summer it is possible to steal a walk by climbing this peak after work for a rewarding sunset.

Werribee Gorge

About halfway to Ballarat on the western side of Melbourne the Werribee River has cut a


deep gorge. Surrounded by farmland, it initially appears to offer little to those seeking a wilderness feel. However, once in the gorge the nearby farmland is not visible and the walking can be quite rugged. There is a marked circuit walk on the north side but the more interesting walking can be reached by accessing the main gorge from the south through the side creek of Ironbark Gorge. This is 'real' walking, without marked tracks, and it is possible to do an interesting circuit.



Mt Cole

This little-known forest reserve west of Ballarat provides some interesting walking through granite country. The granite is exposed in a number of cliff-faces, both overhanging and slabs. The best walking is from the Middle Creek valley in the Mt Buangor State Park where the tracks are not heavily used and are usually covered in dense leaf litter. There are several tracks of varying lengths and it should be possible to return to Melbourne for dinner after a rewarding walk.

Wonderland Range

The ultimate stolen walk from Melbourne is a visit to the Grampians. An early start is required as it is a three-hour drive each way, but it is possible to walk to the Pinnacle from Halls Gap and return for dinner. This is one of Victoria's more spectacular walks, featuring sandstone cliffs, waterfalls, eroded canyons and lookouts. 

Bushwalking writer John Chapman has been contributing to *Wild* since issue one. His favourite place is Tasmania although he regularly visits all other Australian States.

across the Jamison Valley from Echo Point at Katoomba. However, the summit is reached by far fewer people and it remains a worthwhile goal—a real mountain surrounded by impressive cliff-lines on most sides. Access begins near the Scenic Railway and the track follows the line of an old horse tramway out to the Ruined Castle. From there the track heads up a spectacular sandstone, knife-blade ridge to the western end of the mountain. This is not a long day-trip and most of the walking is quite easy but you need to coordinate travel arrangements well. Catching the Scenic Railway down to and up from the valley floor may save some time.

The upper Grose valley

The upper Grose valley provides many classic bushwalking destinations that can be reached

well-planned, extended trips. Having lived in Hobart for more than 30 years I still tend to perceive the south-west as very remote even though much of it is visible from the summit of Mt Wellington. However, while extended trips in the wilderness are perhaps the ultimate experience, many visitors may find themselves passing through Hobart for other reasons—perhaps a business trip or a family holiday with only a spare day or two to get out into the real bush. All the usual caveats about being suitably experienced, watching the weather forecasts and always carrying suitable clothing and other gear apply.

Hartz Mountains

South-west of Geeveston, Hartz Mountains National Park provides grandstand views of the south-west. The drive from Hobart only



The great view from Tasmania's Adamsons Peak makes a day's escape from the office very worth while.

comfortably in a day-trip from Sydney, including that Mecca of Sydney bushwalkers, the Blue Gum Forest. One of my favourite places in the upper Grose is Hanging Rock, a place of amazing verticality matched in few other locations. Access is from Blackheath along a blocked-off fire track, so bikes are again useful. The actual walk is very short but care needs to be taken as it is quite close to unfenced cliff-tops. Take your camera and a wide-angle lens.

Canyoning

Some of the less remote canyons, such as Thunder and Claustal canyons near Mt Tomah on the Bells Line of Road, make excellent short trips. Solo canyoning is not recommended but if you can find a friend or two to go with you during the week you will avoid the weekend crowds.

Walks from Hobart

I suspect that most mainland walkers consider Tasmania to be a place principally for

takes about one and a half hours and the access road takes you to 900 metres above sea level, so there isn't much climbing and the trip can be completed in a relatively short day. Hartz Peak can be comfortably reached in a three-hour return walk but if you have more time a circuit to Mt Snowy and back by way of Emily Tarn is well worth while.

Adamsons Peak

Adamsons Peak is often referred to as the 'Fujiyama of the south' because of its winter snowcap and symmetrical conical shape when viewed from Dover. It provides a great view of some of the most remote and mysterious areas in the south-west on the northern side of Precipitous Bluff and the South Coast Range. Allow two hours each way from Hobart and check the latest road access as it tends to change periodically due to logging operations. The track tends to be muddy or overgrown in some areas and there is a climb of about 1000 metres but



the views from the open alpine areas make it worth the effort. With a small party and a steady pace the walking can be completed in seven hours.

Mt Picton

Mt Picton, one of the most alluring and significant peaks in the south-west, lies quite close to what used to be the main route into Federation Peak. However, this track

it's only about an one-and-a-half hour drive to Lake Dobson from Hobart. From there a one-one-and-a-half hour walk will take you to the Rodway Range. The views from here on a clear winter's day are truly superb: many of the major peaks in the south-west can be seen with their winter coat of snow. The scenery is even more spectacular further out towards Mt Field West and this trip has been my favourite stolen walk for some

quite fit to do the walk in less than seven hours. However, for those prepared to make the effort it is still quite feasible as a day walk and in good weather the views are unsurpassed. Allow about five hours for the return drive from Hobart.

Schnells Ridge

This quartzite range, directly south of Mt Anne, contains a number of beautiful tarns and is reached by the Lake Judd track. It is significantly lower in elevation than the Mt Anne range. However, it feels more remote than Mt Anne does from the Scotts Peak road, and its location is relatively central to the major mountain ranges of the south-west, imparting a more 'wild' impression. The climb to the twin peaks of Schnells Ridge is relatively easy and can be completed in about five hours return from the Scotts Peak road.

Tasman Peninsula

Many trips can be completed within a seven-eight hour time frame from Hobart. The area is quite different from the south-west and the weather is often better. However, the terrain is still very rugged and spectacular. Destinations for stolen walks include Cape Hauy, Cape Raoul, Clemes Peak and Tatnells Hill. 



Left, you wouldn't want to slip! Hanging Rock, the Blue Mountains. **Noble. Above, Hartz Peak and Lake Hartz certainly fulfil the criteria of a 'really inspiring, spectacular destination'.**

has been superseded by other routes and is now overgrown. A new track, from the Picton River by way of Lake Riveaux, enables Mt Picton to be reached in a return walk of six-seven hours. An early start and a steady pace will have you back in Hobart in time for dinner.

Mt Field National Park

Mt Field National Park is a pleasant and picturesque place to visit at any time of the year. However, if you are ever around Hobart on a really clear winter's day and there's some snow on Mt Wellington, don't miss the opportunity to go to Mt Field. Provided the road has been cleared of snow,



30 years. While it's a relatively easy walk to the beginning of the Rodway Range, to proceed further under full winter conditions requires the use of cross-country skis or snowshoes.

Mt Anne

Mt Anne, the queen of the south-west, is probably the ultimate stolen walk from Hobart. A fair bit of climbing is involved, some of it exposed, and you need to be

Graham Wootton

After growing up in the Blue Mountains of NSW, Graham moved to Tasmania in 1971 to work as a structural engineer. His outdoor interests include bushwalking, cross-country skiing, mountain biking and wilderness photography. He runs a commercial photography business in Hobart.



Testing Boundaries in the Victorian Alps

Four peaks, full packs and four days of walking took *Judy Clayton* outside her comfort zone. She relates an empowering experience



Tony Maasackers and Catherine Smart admire the view from Mt Koonika. Stephen Hamilton

ELEVEN YEARS AGO I RECEIVED AN INVITATION from friends I had met while travelling in Istanbul, Turkey. 'What are you doing after Christmas?' they asked. 'Come bushwalking with us.' I don't know what compelled me to step so far outside my comfort zone and go bush with these incredibly experienced and knowledgeable people but that's exactly what I did: I went for five days to Mt Bogong with borrowed gear and without an idea!

I learned a lot about myself on that first trip and I was hooked, not least because they brought along one of their friends who is now my husband. The years rolled by but our passion for the outdoors didn't dim; we travelled extensively overseas, walked and cycled thousands of kilometres. Then the inevitable happened: babies.

There is a lot to be said for having a family. Our children have truly enriched our lives

and taught me more in their short years than the rest of my 39 years put together. Which is why, in the lead up to my 40th birthday, I realised that to remain a whole person for them I needed to be a whole person for myself.

On every trip I had trusted the navigational skills and local knowledge of Rob, my husband, without question. This had been a bit frustrating but I doubted my own abilities, and it was what we had always done. However, as our family grew there were fewer opportunities for getting out together: we could take our kids on short jaunts but serious trips were out of the question. It was obvious that if I wanted to go on trips, I was going to have to learn several new skills and take yet another big step out of my comfort zone. I would also have to find other like-minded individuals who had access to child care (other women)!

This explains why last autumn I wound up on the top of Mt Koonika in the Victorian Alps, map in one hand and GPS in the other, my newly indoctrinated walking partner Aija casting sideways glances at me as I pointed straight down the spur and announced, 'The track goes down there'. I would like to think that I oozed confidence and she was inspired by my apparent wealth of knowledge! She had, after all, spent some thousands of dollars on new equipment and was stepping out, bunions and all. (For the uninitiated this is a painful condition of the feet made worse by walking—what a trooper.)

It had taken me four years of careful planning to get to this point. Initially I had planned a week of 'girly' holidays once a year, inviting friends and going to Queensland and Tasmania. But what I really wanted was to go bushwalking—one friend said she



if I wanted to hold on to a walking partner I would have to keep her enthusiasm alive.

We parked at King Hut on the Speculation Road and walked to Lake Cobbler by way of The Staircase. This is a four-wheel-drive track and had some traffic on it but for the uninitiated it was good enough. The weather was spectacular for April: the High Country really turned it on for us, displaying carpets of wild flowers and clear skies in an effort to impress.

When we arrived at Lake Cobbler it reverberated to the sweet sounds of a barking dog and the football on a car radio so we camped well away from the general morass. We had our solitude and

there aren't straight lines in nature; everything takes twice as long as you think when you have a pack on your back; and water is a scarce commodity that should be carefully conserved. It was a big day!

We left the lake and walked for an hour and a half to the top of Mt Cobbler—our first peak—before rejoining the track and heading to Mt Speculation. I thought that there was some water available off the track about halfway along and was proud when we found a supply some 300 metres downhill from a dry creek-bed before Mustering Flat. This sent my confidence soaring.

Anyone who has ever donned a rucksack knows that you cannot cover the same ground over rough terrain, up- and downhill, at the same pace as you would without

“To the hardened walker this probably seems like overkill but this was my metaphorical Mt Everest. I was about to walk over the edge of my comfort zone and I was taking someone else along for the ride.”



would come but who would carry all the empties? Then in 2004 four of us got together and walked the Overland Track in Tasmania. While not difficult in terms of navigation, it was empowering nonetheless.

Aija missed the opportunity to come to Tassie and asked me to take her to the High Country at Easter that same year. I was gentle with her: off we went on a return trip to Mt Buggery by way of Macalister Springs. Nice and easy, a base camp and day pack. Fool! She was hooked.

I took her bushwalking all over Wilsons Promontory; we walked so extensively on the Mornington Peninsula that we felt like custodians: still she did not give up. Only one thing for it—four days with full packs over three craggy peaks in the High Country. The sense of responsibility almost overwhelmed me but

enjoyed the frogs and ducks at a time of day when we would normally be chasing children and preparing meals.

On the second day Aija was to learn many things: topographic maps do not lie;

your pack. This was the lesson of the day for Aija. As the day progressed she began to drag her feet; then the thunderclouds rolled in. I announced, in my sweetest but most insistent voice, that not only was it

A camp-site among the snow gums on top of Mt Speculation, the second craggy peak on the walk described. Andrew Bain

going to rain but it was going to pour and we should step on it, now! We heard the first thunderclaps and, with the innocence of a walker who has never set up a tent in the rain, she said, 'Do you really think it's going to rain?' I could have wrung her neck. I filled our hydration bags at Camp Creek and pointed her up the hill toward Mt Speculation with the order that she find a grassy knoll off to the right and begin to put up the tent. I flew up the hill behind her and we threw the tent up just as the heavens opened and the lightning began to strike all around us. Only then did I discover that it wasn't 'okay' that Aija had mumbled as she left me at Camp Creek but, 'What the hell is a grassy knoll?'

We were dry, warm and well-fed while the storm continued into the night. The torrential rain drowned out all other noises except those made by the native rat that sounded as though he had severe sinusitis as he made his nocturnal wanderings around our door. This inoffensive but annoying creature was not in the least intimidated by our presence; Aija was afraid of him but I just wanted him to shut up! I earned Brownie points by manhandling him from the immediate environs and he did not come back. We learned; the

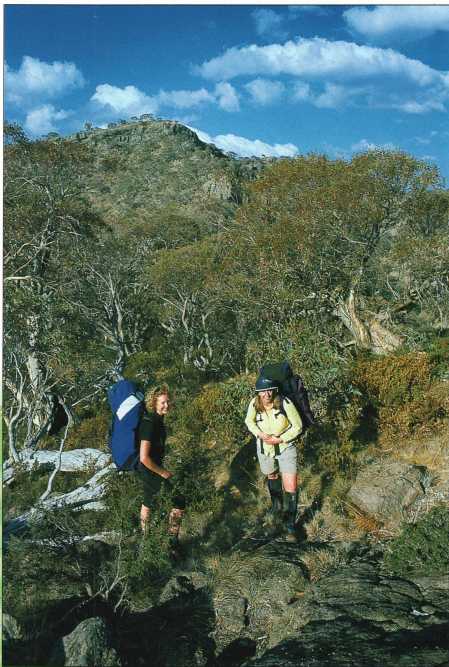
following night we hung our packs up in a tree.

The next day was clear and sunny. We opted for an easier day and started out by climbing our second craggy peak, Mt Speculation. The low clouds formed a blanket over most of the valleys below, leaving the

surrounding hills exposed. This vista alone put all our hard work into perspective—there aren't any straight lines in nature and on this trip we definitely weren't going to be walking one!

We headed straight downhill to Catherine Saddle and pushed on to Mt Despair for a

Mts Cobbler and Koonika



Catherine Smart and Zoë Hamilton seem undaunted by the climb to Mt Koonika (seen in the background) up King Spur. Glenn van der Knijff

quiet lunch. No fewer than 16 teenagers came marching over the hill, preceded by the smell of wood smoke. They were on the ninth day of an 11-day walk and their energy and enthusiasm made our modest efforts seem tame. We had a greater spring in our step as we headed back up the Australian Alps Walking Track to Camp Creek. I was preoccupied by thoughts of the next

day, which I knew was going to be long and tiring.

Our final day entailed a descent from our third craggy peak, Mt Koonika, to the Mt Speculation Road by way of King Spur. It's only a distance of seven kilometres but I had walked this route before and knew it would take us several hours and really test Aija's enthusiasm. The spur is long, steep and rocky and the track is ambiguous in places. I was concerned about my own skills but Aija had

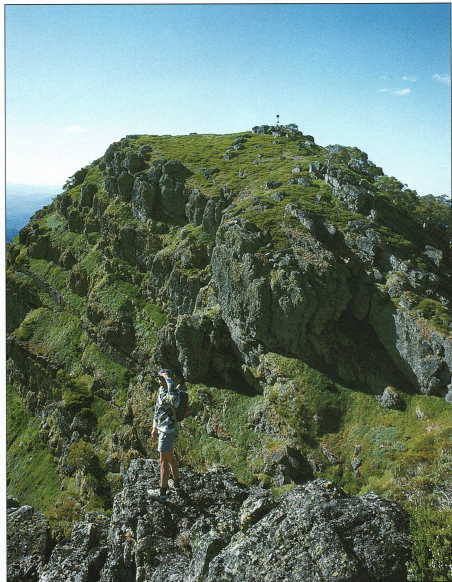
my metaphorical Mt Everest. I was about to walk over the edge of my comfort zone and I was taking someone else along for the ride.

Halfway down the first rocky descent Aija told me that she gets vertigo; my nerves get a rattle. I play with the GPS and wait for her. I tell myself that it's okay, I am a strong and intelligent woman and I can do this (internal groan). At the first saddle I hear the walkers' equivalent of 'are we there yet?'

I knew that Aija could and would do this and that I was more capable than I had ever given myself credit for. I almost felt like a responsible adult!

So down we went, despite the lack of a track, until we found a faint one that soon became clearer. I pointed out the occasional cairn of rocks, hoping to give Aija confidence. Her feet were very painful and she was going through the same feelings that we all go through at some stage.

Walking the last few hundred metres to the car, which had taken on the magnitude of a trip to Mecca by this stage, I gathered my courage and asked her if she'd do it again. Her response was unequivocal—absolutely, where are we going next, I wouldn't



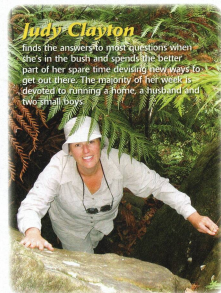
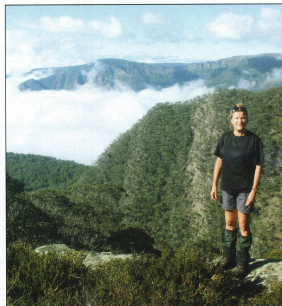
Mt Cobbler's imposing, craggy face dominates the skyline. Hamilton. Above right, Aija Dowling greets the morning on top of Mt Speculation. Judy Clayton

been so positive for the entire trip that I thought it was worth the effort. Our alternative was to walk back down the four-wheel-drive track and The Staircase to the car: hard on the feet but easy walking.

We stood on Mt Koonika and I pointed out our route down the rocky face, smiling, my heart in my mouth. Aija was a trooper; she had faith in me even when I seriously doubted my own abilities—it is because of her that we pushed on down that spur all bloody day! To the hardened walker this probably seems like overkill but this was

accompanied by a pained expression and the flicker of a smile. What could I say? I made encouraging noises, smiled, and we pushed on.

Aija maintained both her sense of humour and her spirit until we got to the end of Koonika Spur. I pointed out our route off to the side down King Spur where the track disappeared altogether. My stomach knotted with nerves as Aija made noises that sounded like a canine, and not a happy one at that. It was at this point that a funny thing happened. I knew that it wasn't a problem;



mind a trip to the Viking—you get the general idea. I felt exonerated and empowered at the same time.

I have done a lot of walking over the years but this was the ultimate in terms of personal growth. The best came later when the same friend who had taken me on that walk at Mt Bogong 11 years earlier called me an inspiration. That was enough for me.





STAR STATUS

The Routeburn and Milford Tracks

A comparison of two of New Zealand's
most famous walks, by **Tom Putt**

AT FIRST IT MAY SEEM A LITTLE UNFAIR TO compare two walking tracks such as the Routeburn and Milford, especially given that the Milford Track is so well known. It may also appear unfair to compare any two walks as different seasons can produce wildly different but spectacular

scenery and the weather can be remarkably variable, especially in an area that receives up to eight metres of rain a year! And let's face it, your choice of walking companions can make a trip a pleasure or a chore. However, here goes...

Walkers beside Lake Harris, a glacial lake that is the source of the Routeburn Falls. All uncredited photos by the author

THE ROUTEBURN TRACK

Not as well known as the Milford Track yet almost as popular, the Routeburn Track is a 33 kilometre, three-day walk. It is adjacent to the Milford Track on the eastern side of Milford Road, the picturesque main road into Milford Sound. Unlike the Milford Track, this walk can be done from either end and does not require boat access. The Routeburn Track is walked by more than 13 000 people a year, only a fraction less than the Milford and, like its more famous neighbour, the Routeburn requires a booking.

People often debate the best direction in which to walk the track. I started at the Glenorchy side in the east, finishing in the west at The Divide, closer to the start of the Milford Track that I had booked to walk straight after. My decision meant that the first day was harder and more scenic but the next two days were mostly downhill—good to do the hard stuff while your legs are still fresh, I say! Nevertheless, some people prefer to walk uphill for two days to ‘walk



into’ the more spectacular scenery at the end.

This trip was booked in haste and I had very few expectations. I reasoned that if the walk required booking six months in advance, it must be good! My primary motivation for walking the tracks was to photograph the spectacular scenery—I wasn’t disappointed.

Starting in mid-afternoon at the Routeburn Shelter in Mt Aspiring National Park, the bright summer sun presented me with the track’s namesake—the Route Burn—a crystal-clear river that carves its way through the Routeburn Gorge. The lack of tannin in the leaves in New Zealand, together with the clean snow and glacial melt, meant that most of the rivers I saw in New Zealand flowed with amazingly clear, turquoise



ROUTEburn TRACK

Distance: 33 kilometres

Length: three or four days

Walking season: 31 October–30 April

Bookings: are essential and open on 1 July through the Department of Conservation (DOC) Web site: www.doc.govt.nz Alternatively, call the Great Walks Booking Office on 64 3 249 8514

Cost: (2005 prices) \$NZ40 a night for huts, \$NZ10 a night for camping—must be paid at the time of booking

Guided walking: from \$NZ950. Separate huts are used

Transport: various bus companies travel from Queenstown to the Routeburn Shelter or The Divide. Go to www.infotrack.co.nz for itineraries and prices

Left, the palatial interior of the Routeburn Falls Hut—should it be renamed the Routeburn Hyatt?

Above, the spectacular scenery of the Routeburn Track: looking down on the Routeburn Flats and the Route Burn during the first day’s walk.

water. I was literally mesmerised by the sight at first, standing on the river’s edge watching the water.

The track follows the Route Burn, making its way through *Lord of the Rings*-like rainforest with moss and lichen hanging over everything. It then crosses over numerous swing-bridges spanning the river before opening up to the Routeburn Flats, a flat grassland on each side of the Route Burn. The balmy weather on the first day even coaxed many walkers on to the flats to

sunbathe! I could see the Routeburn Falls in the distance, the impressive series of falls cascading down from the glacial plateau. Next to the falls is the impressive Routeburn

track, Harris Saddle at 1277 metres, there were stunning views across the valley to the snowcapped Darran Mountains. From there a short, steep track led up Conical Hill with spectacular views along the Hollyford valley to the Tasman Sea. The track traversed the steep and exposed Hollyford Face for several

chose to spend the afternoon lying on the lush, green grass by the lake soaking up the rare Fiordland sunlight.

On the third consecutive day of sunshine I followed the track as it wound through more amazing rainforest and subalpine sections to Earland Falls. Again, the water looked inviting but I chose to avoid hypo-

The panoramic views through the deep valleys in fine weather are to die for, and the Routeburn Falls Hut is a place I would happily call home.



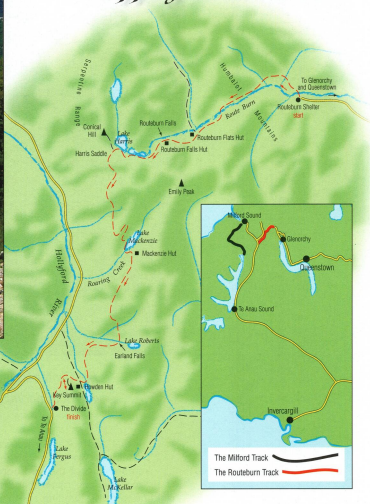
Falls Hut, my first night's stay.

The walking system in New Zealand is unique. Most of the tracks have very clean, comfortable huts for walkers to stay in each night rather than having to camp. Most huts are supplied with gas cookers, tables, running water, lights, heating, and bunks with mattresses during the walking season. The only essentials to bring are food, a billy, sleeping-bag, clothes and, of course, a camera!

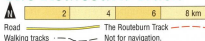
The Routeburn Falls Hut is one out of the box—seriously, this place should be renamed the Routeburn Hyatt! The views down to the Routeburn Flats are spectacular and the hut is furnished in stunning, polished pine.

On the second day the sun was shining as the track climbed on to the glacial plateau to Lake Harris, the source of the Routeburn Falls. From the highest point of the

hours, high above the valley floor, before descending in zigzags to the hut at Lake Mackenzie. The double-storey hut is on the shores of the emerald-green lake, which looked inviting until I dipped my toe in. Apparently people walk through the snow in winter to ice-skate on Lake Mackenzie! I



The Routeburn Track



thermia. I enjoyed my lunch in the sun on one of the large boulders adjacent to the falls, sitting for hours listening to the water cascade from the cliffs above, before continuing my gradual descent to Howden Hut where you can stay on the third night. It is only an hour to the track's end, so I bypassed the hut and continued down to catch my bus to the start of the Milford Track. Near the end was a nice two-hour side-trip to Key Summit, which has spectacular views of the Darran Mountains and Hollyford valley.

THE MILFORD TRACK

Once described as one of the finest walks in the world, the Milford Track is in the south-west of the South Island in the Fiordland National Park. The track is one of New Zealand's most popular walks and more than 14 000 people complete it every year. Bookings are essential and need to be made well in advance. December and January are the most popular months and dates for these should be sought when bookings open in July. Only 40 walkers are permitted to start the walk each day and you must stay in the huts. Unlike the Routeburn, the Milford Track

track is a metre wide and carved into the ground with a 15 centimetre lip on either side. The next day, as our hut warden zooms by us on her four-wheeled buggy, I find out

several walkers are sitting on the decking, reading books.

I set off early on the second day, keen to take advantage of the fine conditions. Not



must be walked in one direction, from south to north. One drawback of the Milford is that you must complete each day's walk as scheduled regardless of the weather. Boat transport is needed at both ends: it can be booked through the DOC office.

At first I am disappointed. Here I am, in what is supposed to be wilderness, yet the



The Clinton valley's steep walls cascade with hundreds of waterfalls during rain. Julie Ihle

that the track allows hut wardens and track workers quickly to reach remote parts of the track for maintenance. I discover later that the track is prone to heavy flooding.

A short way along the track is Glade House, the first night's stop for the 'soapies' (guided walkers). Apparently when walking the track with them that's all you can smell. Money buys a shower, home-cooked meal and alcohol each night. It is a further two-hour walk to Clinton Hut, my first overnight stop.

It's first come, first served at the hut—I score the bunk closest to the door. It's a good idea to take earplugs as foot traffic and snoring can be disruptive! There are two separate huts joined by a central timber courtyard that was bathed in sunlight when I ar-

too many people get even one fine day on the Milford Track and this was my second! The hut warden's advice from the night before rang in my ears—if the weather is fine scale Mackinnon Pass that afternoon. The track follows the Clinton River, with stunning rainforest lining its banks. After a few hours the track opens into the Clinton valley, a glacial, U-shaped valley with steep walls on both sides. The vegetation also changes, rainforest turning to shorter shrubs and bushes. Numerous waterfalls flowed down the valley walls from recent rains but my experience on the Milford was somewhat unfulfilled. No rain on the second day meant that I didn't experience one of the sights for which the Milford is renowned, when hundreds of waterfalls appear literally in mi-

nutes, flowing down the valley walls. The lack of soil on the top of the granite walls means that very little water soaks into the ground, and when it rains in Fiordland, it pours!

Gradually climbing my way up the valley, I caught my first glimpse of Mackinnon Pass, the infamous section where walkers climb 800 metres over the saddle to finish

the second half of the track. I desperately wanted to get to Mintaro, the second night's hut, which sits at the base of the climb, so I could get up the pass while the weather was fine. There was no time to rest: I reached the hut, dumped the gear and started the journey up the mountain. There are nine switchbacks, each one shorter than the last. In less than an hour I was at the top

been helicoptered out the day before after rolling their ankles. There are spectacular waterfalls along the 'Staircase', a section where DOC has built a long section of wooden stairs to make the long descent easier.

At the bottom of the Arthur valley I dumped my pack at the public shelter and took a short side-trip to Sutherland Falls,

“The next day we discovered that everything they say about the Milford Track being beautiful in the rain is true. There was a filmy quality to the ferns, and the rain hooked up with temporary waterfalls that streamed down sheer rock-faces.”



MILFORD TRACK

Distance: 53 kilometres

Length: four days

Walking season: 31 October–30 April

Bookings: as for the Routeburn Track

Cost: (2005 prices) \$NZ120—must be paid at the time of booking

Guided walking: from \$NZ1490

Transport: boats are essential for reaching the start and end of the track; they can be booked at the same time as the walk but do not have to be paid for then. Costs are around \$NZ30–55 for each leg. Various bus companies travel from Te Anau to the boat launch and Milford Sound back to Te Anau or Queenstown. More information can be found at www.infotrack.co.nz

A walker admires the view from halfway up the Mackinnon Pass. Ihle

(1154 metres). The reward for my efforts was magnificent views back down my route along the Clinton valley, and views over the other side to where I would walk the next day. Again, I was lucky with the weather. Only three weeks before, the pass was covered by a foot of snow from summer snowstorms!

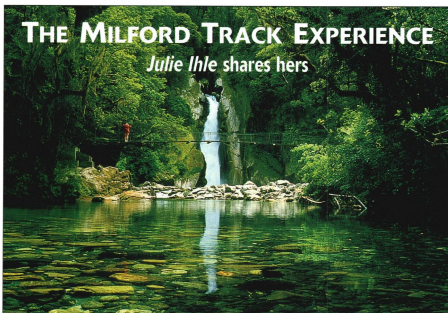
I hit the track early the next morning as I knew how long and strenuous that climb up to the pass was from the day before—my legs were still feeling it. After the pass, the track winds its way down into the Arthur valley. Many find this the most difficult part of the track as it is steep in sections and sure footing is needed. Two people had

the fifth-highest falls in the world. The track then follows the Arthur River to Dumphling Hut, the third night's stay.

The last day was the most enjoyable for me. It is the longest day (18 kilometres) but there is plenty of time to enjoy the sights before catching the boat at Sandfly Point, the end of the track. Setting off early, I again admired the stunning blue water from my vantage point high above the Arthur River on the second-longest swing-bridge on the track. A short distance further Mackay Falls roars down from the steep valley walls and Giant Gate Falls can be admired from another swing-bridge that takes walkers high

THE MILFORD TRACK EXPERIENCE

Julie Ihle shares hers



The Giant Gate Falls—a good place for a dip? Ihle

Often called the finest walk in the world, the Milford Track is a 54 kilometre walk that takes four days. There are two ways you can attempt it: you can either do a guided walk with soft beds, three-course meals, showers, alcohol and drying rooms or walk independently. Even the latter must be booked months in advance. It may be the finest walk in the world but it is also the most tightly controlled. As one of New Zealand's natural icons I guess it has to be.

At the walk's start at Te Anau we caught snippets of conversation from other walkers. Due to exceptionally high rains the previous week all the walkers had to be helicoptered out—the track had turned into one big bog and people couldn't get over the pass. With fresh snow on the peaks and rain bucketing down this was not a comforting thought. Not only would you would miss out on the Milford Track experience but you would also have to pay for your airlift! We tried not to think about it.

From the wharf it's a flat and easy five kilometres to the first hut—Clinton Hut. Even though we were only a boat trip away from civilisation it felt quite other-worldly. A fine mist covered the ferns, low cloud was suspended above our heads—this was real hobbit country.

There were quite a lot of Kiwis, including family groups, doing the walk. To New Zealanders the Milford Track is a bit like Mt Kosciuszko is to us, but there were also the obligatory European backpackers and a smattering of Aussies. Everyone talked about the weather forecast, which was rain, rain, rain.

The next day we discovered that every thing they say about the Milford Track being beautiful in the rain is true. There was a filmy quality to the ferns, and the rain hooked up with temporary waterfalls that streamed down sheer rock-faces. We plodded on. It may have been mystical but it was also cold—the sort that slowly seeps into your bones and makes you grumpy.

The walk re-entered beech forest and then gently started to incline. We stopped for a drink at a shelter inconspicuously called Bus Stop. Around the corner we passed Pompolona Lodge, where the guided walkers

stay. In there was cold beer, hot showers, three-course dinners and a drying room. We trudged on to our DOC hut.

From Mintaro Hut it's a steady climb to the base of Mackinnon Pass. The pass itself is around 1000 metres high but considerably more gentle than you'd expect as the track is graded into zigzags.

The view was awesome and it was hard to leave but we had another eight kilometres walk to Dumpling Hut, our next night's accommodation. The views on the way down were even more spectacular than at the top: around every corner was another tarn, sheer cliff-face or snowy peak.

We reached the bottom in a ball of sweat but decided we really had to do the detour to Sutherland Falls. We dumped our packs and, feeling newly liberated, embarked on the one-and-a-half-hour return trip to Sutherland Falls. These are the fifth, sixth or seventh highest falls in the world depending on which guidebook you read. They are stunning but I don't think anything can match the view from the top of the pass.

Day four began gently. The track meandered along the Arthur River and it was mostly flat and uneventful walking. You could catch glimpses of mountain peaks through the ferns by the river.

We ate lunch sitting on some rocks under the suspension bridge at Giant Gate Falls and braced ourselves for a dip. Quite a crowd had gathered. The North Island dairy farmers stripped to their underwear and dived in and Tina, Baz and I felt compelled to follow. Egged on by the crowd, we immersed ourselves for a grand total of about six seconds.

It was terrifyingly cold, but it invigorated us for the last stretch of the walk. One and a half hours later we got to Sandfly Point, the official end of the track. It had been a gorgeous day but a sense of sadness was creeping in. Tonight at the lodge in Milford Sound we planned to celebrate the end of the track Kiwi style—with a hot shower, cold beer and a lamb roast. ☀

Julie Ihle has spent a decade photographing and walking in the Australian and New Zealand bush. On weekends she escapes to the Blue Mountains as often as possible.

above the river. By this stage the rain had really set in so I pushed ahead to find posts in the ground pointing inwards on either side of the track. To me it was pretty obvious where the track was but a former guide told me later that he had walked that section of track with water up to his chest! Eight metres of rain annually equates to roughly two centimetres of rain every day in Fiordland—the equivalent for Melbourne is one centimetre a week!

Before long I reached Sandfly Point—it's pretty obvious where it got its name. I felt that the clouds of sandflies could carry me back to shore, removing the need for a boat! As we calmly glided through the water, I saw Mitre Peak for the first time. The majestic peak rose from the water, towering above the boat, at the end of what had been a fine time in the wilderness.



Tom Putt

is a professional photographer from Melbourne. His passion is panoramic landscape photography.

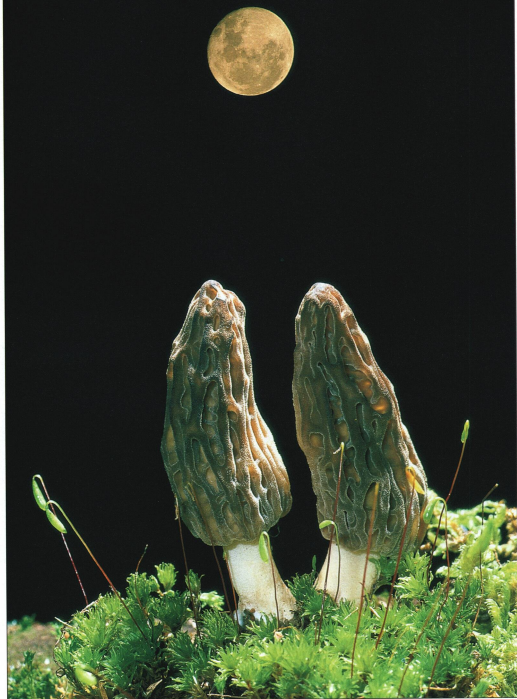
THE VERDICT

Both walks are spectacular and I highly recommend each of them; however, I found the Routeburn Track more appealing. There are many reasons for this: the spectacular scenery; the variety of terrain and vegetation; the rainforests; the Route Burn with its crystal-clear water cascading over beautifully smooth rocks. The panoramic views through the deep valleys in fine weather are to die for, and the Routeburn Falls Hut is a place I would happily call home. But the logistics of walking the track give the Routeburn a distinct edge over the Milford Track as you don't need boat transport to reach the track and it can be done in either direction. You can also walk into one hut for the night and walk back out again. If you're into camping, there are two designated camp-sites near the huts. My advice: book as soon as you can.

The Milford was also spectacularly scenic in parts. However, I guess walking the Routeburn Track only days before had spoilt me and its reputation had caused my expectations to exceed reality. Perhaps if I had seen it under its infamous conditions—pouring rain—I may have thought more of it. ☀

miniature
MIRACLES

John Cooper explains what you miss when you
look without seeing



Fungi have no need of sunlight. These morels appear to worship the moon.

LYING PROSTRATE ON THE forest floor, partly covered in leaf litter, I was only vaguely aware of a bushwalker who had come to a sudden halt near me. Removing my eye from the viewfinder of my camera, I looked up at the young woman and hastily offered some explanation for my horizontal position, drawing her attention to the tiny cluster of red mushrooms (*Hygrocybe miniata*) I was photographing. She was amazed that she hadn't noticed any of these exquisite forest gems on her walk along the Coachwood Nature Track, one of the many walks in the Megalong Valley, the Blue Mountains, New South Wales. I was equally amazed as the rainforest was alive with mushrooms of varied shapes and colours and I was able to show her several other fungal specimens protruding through the leaf litter. After a close examination, she continued along the track at a more leisurely pace with an increased awareness of the natural world.

This was not an isolated case but one that I frequently encounter during my photographic excursions. Many bushwalkers have their eyes fixed on the track and fail really to see the environment around them. To the budding naturalist 'seeing' is the catalyst for enquiring minds, one that has a thirst for the hows, whys, and wherefores, and answers are constantly sought.

Mushrooms (or toadstools) are the reproductive bodies of fungi and an important range of micro-organisms responsible for the decay of organic matter. Without this ravenous group of organisms, scientists think that the fallen litter on the forest floor would eventually form an impenetrable barrier that piled up to the canopy of the forest. The mass of tiny hair-like filaments that constitute the main body of a fungus is generally not seen but forms an underground web that penetrates rotting vegetation, digesting the plant cells and returning valuable nutrients to the soil.

The enormous variation in the size and colour of mushrooms is amazing—from a few millimetres in diameter to larger than a dinner plate, from dark and drab to red and yellow, and some that glow in the dark. The world of mushrooms encompasses bizarre tongues, ears, cups and delicate shapes reminiscent of coral and ferns.



The coral-like fruit of *Clavaria zollingeri* can often be found around tree ferns in a rainforest. **Right**, the slight pressure exerted by rain or dew on the walls of a puff ball can cause it to expel a cloud of powdery spores.





A red dragonfly awaits the sun's warming rays. **Right**, alpine skippers perched like mirror images. **Far right**, a dew-laden damselfly resembles a Christmas-tree ornament.





John Cooper has been an amateur naturalist for as long as he can remember. It wasn't until 1986, at the age of 46, that he decided to record his subjects on film. John soon developed a passion for serious wildlife photography and in August 2004 he won a section of the ANZANG Nature & Landscape Photographer of the Year. In July 1999 John took an early retirement from medical pathology to pursue his interest in natural-history photography.

Heavy dew falling from the foliage above my tent woke me from a deep sleep: it was 6 am in the Kanangra Boyd Wilderness Area, 50 kilometres east of Oberon, NSW. Cold mornings had attracted me to this alpine wilderness—the temperatures temporarily immobilise a variety of winged insects, allowing me a few hours of light to observe and photograph them.

I headed across the creek into an area best described as a sphagnum-moss bog, an environment that is usually rich in insect life. Even so, the sight before me was beyond my expectations.

The larger insects were the most stunning: wings heavily laden with dewdrops they glistened in the early morning light, resembling Christmas-tree ornaments. A distant figure disturbed my concentration: a trout fisherman taking a short cut to the creek was ploughing through this delicate ecosystem like a tank. I could see the burst of dewdrops as insects were dislodged from their overnight perches by his passage and tumbled to the ground.

After the usual pleasantries, I pointed out the surrounding insects in their state of suspended animation. He hadn't noticed them and spent the next ten minutes on his hands and knees admiring their intricate structures and colourful markings—or maybe imagining attaching the insects to the end of his line! As he walked away I noticed that he periodically bent over as he continued to admire these new-found treasures.

Insects in the alpine and sub-alpine regions have adapted to freezing conditions. They are cold-blooded and have no physiological control over heat loss or heat gain. As temperatures begin to drop late in the afternoon most insects find a perch on which to spend the night as once the temperature falls to a certain level—usually 12–18°C—activity ceases. At a lower temperature (around 5–10°C) metabolism ceases and insects go into a temporary state of 'suspended animation' (quiescence).

Next time you are walking through the wilderness, slow down, look around and enjoy these smaller, intricate wonders of our natural world. 🇦🇺



WAY OF THE WATERFALL

LAMINGTON

Andrew Bain tries to keep his feet dry while exploring the waterfalls and rainforests of south-east Queensland's National Park



LAMINGTON NATIONAL PARK HAS THE QUINT-essential Australian name but it's far from the quintessential Australian place. Not here the classic imagery of a sunburnt country, or a land of sweeping plains.

Hard against the Queensland–New South Wales border, Lamington is characterised by bottle-green rainforest and chains of waterfalls. Only an hour from Brisbane, it's a pocket of the tropical dream that people chase as far as Cairns or Cape York, not realising that it can be found close to the capital city.

Lamington is the centre-piece of the Scenic Rim, the northern wall of what was once one of Australia's great volcanoes. It isn't a park you come to for drives, to swim, to abseil or to ride horses. There is only one way through its tangle of forest and along its fast-dipping streams, and that is on foot.

The Border Track is the backbone of the park, linking the mountain resorts of Binna Burra and O'Reillys, the park's two main centres. It's far from the most impressive of

Lamington's 160 kilometre network of tracks but it's a beginning. And it was the beginning we chose as we set out from O'Reillys on a walk that would showcase many of the park's finest waterfalls and much of its best forest.

We followed the Border Track for an hour as it contoured through the forest, past greedy strangler-figs that squeezed the trees lining the track and vainly encircled boulders too. The midday sun poured through holes in the forest left by fallen giants but otherwise, thwarted by a leaden canopy, barely dappled the damp floor.

We left the Border Track—for now—as it climbed to a crest, turning on to the Albert River Circuit, the furthest removed of three waterfall circuits accessible from O'Reillys. The Albert River Circuit can be walked in a single, 21 kilometre day but it was our intention to link the three circuits—Albert River, Toolona Creek and Canungra Creek—jumping valleys in a clover-shaped route that would

The author strolling past the 'giant, hoof-like trunks of Antarctic beech trees' on the Border Track.

Right, Chalahn Falls, one of the 30 waterfalls passed during the two-day walk. All photos by the author

take us past more than 30 waterfalls and through rare stands of Antarctic beech during the next two days.

Crossing the crest and briefly looping back on itself, the Albert River Circuit began the most gradual of switchback descents to the valley floor, a trajectory (and an effort) like a floating feather. Trees leaned into the track on swirling buttresses and tiny breaks in the canopy revealed adjacent ridges that were just as heavily forested.

At Lightning Creek we hit water for the first time, a small taste of the valley that was

Extravaganza



still below. The switchbacks shortened and, through the terrarium-like enclosure of Lightning Falls—forked true to their name—we came to the Albert River. Water and the muted thunder of waterfalls would now be our almost constant companions.

The track joined the river just below Echo Falls but it was the glimpses downstream that were most impressive. The Albert River fell away in immense steps towards the unseen Black Canyon, each drop appearing from above like an abyss. It would have been an arduous route for anything but water so we headed upstream.

Our time on the river was short, the track following it for little more than a kilometre, but it was a parade—waterfall to waterfall to waterfall. The river fell, tumbled, cascaded and rushed past us at the start of

carrying from the valley like noise from another world.

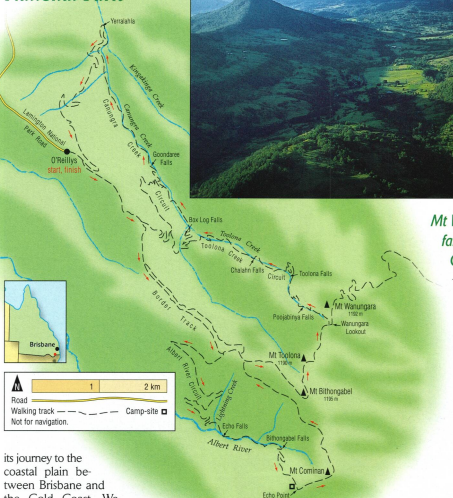
The view encompassed much of the ancient Tweed shield volcano, one of the largest erosion calderas in the world. The upturned nose of Mt Warning—the remnant lava plug—stood alone, sphinx-like, inside a circle of mountains. The southern rim of the caldera, the Nightcap Range, formed a high horizon about 30 kilometres to the south.

Through a notch further east on the McPherson Range came the surreal sight of Surfers Paradise, so near yet so far from this

speckled with electric light. Murwillumbah shone a short distance away and the Byron Bay lighthouse blinked in the distance. The pewter sheen of the Gold Coast formed a halo around the McPherson Range.

An unmarked track headed up the hill from the camp-site, a rough border route that traced the most famous of Lamington legends to the Stinson plane wreck. On 19 February 1937, the *City of Brisbane* crashed into the McPherson Range. Nine days later, after everybody else had abandoned the search, Bernard O'Reilly fought against the rainforest, trusting his instinct about the

Lamington National Park



its journey to the coastal plain between Brisbane and the Gold Coast. We turned uphill and out of the valley at Bithongabel Falls, crossing the river on mossy stepping-stones. It was the seventh waterfall in a short queue.

We were done with waterfalls for the day, instead climbing towards the border escarpment and Echo Point, one of two designated camp-sites along the route. Two hundred metres from camp was Echo Point lookout, where the Queensland mountains plummet into the NSW plains, the sound of cows

wild blanket of rainforest. The city had never looked so good. It was a vague column-graph of skyscraper wannabes, attractive in a detached kind of way. Best of all was the self-congratulatory feeling that came from being up here and not down there.

At night we returned to the lookout, the forest around us now a Christmas tree of blue glow-worm lights and the valley below

Mt Warning, the surrounding ranges and farmland as seen from the Albert River Circuit.

location of the crash. Five people died in the accident but O'Reilly succeeded in rescuing two others. The wreck now serves as almost a pilgrims' route to the remarkable rescue.

On this visit we were more interested in natural than human history. The next morning we ignored the side-trip and continued along the Albert River Circuit track as it seemed, briefly, almost to hang over the edge of the mountain slope.

Our maps showed a succession of lookouts along the precipitous border but failed to allow for the rampant growth of the rainforest. Most viewing points had closed over, leafy shutters that would probably never open again. But there remained an occasional keyhole glimpse, and in the low, dawn light NSW took on the pallid tint of a Turner water-colour.

The Albert River Circuit soon curled back from the mountain edge and returned to the Border Track a few hundred metres from where we'd left it the day before. From our perspective the Border Track's purpose was to join the creek circuits but now it also had attractions of its own. The giant, hoo-like trunks of Antarctic beech trees intruded on to the track, causing it to wend around

them as we headed back towards the border. Fifty million years ago, when Australia's climate was much wetter, these enormous beeches were widespread; today their distribution is limited to southern Queensland and the subtropical forests of northern NSW.

The track contoured across the high slopes of Mts Bithongabel and Toolona past more overgrown lookouts. Old man's beard lichen draped from the trees like moulted hair and, in the early morning, brush turkeys

drop, culminating with Toolona Falls, the highest waterfall of the walk. Toolona Falls rumbled over a gorge-like wall, mist billowing around, dampening us as we negotiated another slippery creek-crossing at its base.

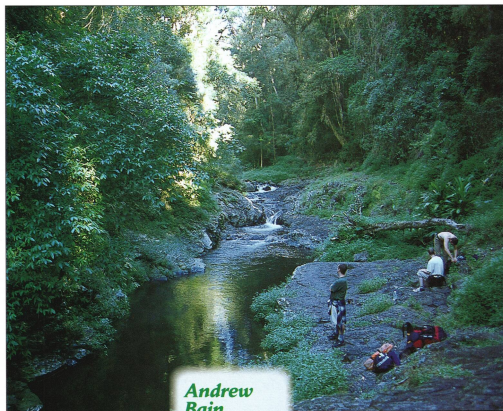
'These are the best falls yet', Greg, my walking companion, assured me. Then he corrected himself as we passed Chalahn Falls, and again as we skipped valleys for the final time, emerging at Canungra Creek by the slot canyon of Box Log Falls.

Piccabene palms formed a secondary canopy in the rainforest as we began to walk along Canungra Creek, where the widening waterway opened a corresponding gash in the forest. Sunlight burst through, pushing back the rainforest, leaving clear, open banks. Gone, too, were the soft, mossy greens of Toolona Creek, the scene growing more violent with the increasing force of the water. But a couple of things stayed the same—the creek churned constantly and the leeches were still thrifty.

Over the next six kilometres we forded the creek six times. These were no longer simple, stepping-stone crossings; we stomped through the water, which was generally (and mercifully) below boot-top level (although a few slips soon fixed that).

After Goondaree (ahem) Falls, midway along the creek, the far cliffside bank closed in, creating an amphitheatre of sheer rock on which not even the most rampant rainforest could secure a toe. No doubt it was the kind of wall that had precipitated the park ban on abseiling.

The creek slowly began to narrow again, the forest closing in and the classic, soft imagery of a rainforested creek returned for our final couple of kilometres to Yerralahlah pool. Beside this fine swimming-hole, the first bit of flat water we'd seen, our creek-side walking ended. Thirty waterfalls were now behind us, some superb and some laughable in their claim.



Andrew Bain

is a Melbourne writer who spends too much time wandering when he should be working. He is the author of *Headwinds*, a book about a 20,000 kilometre cycling journey around Australia.

The fine swimming-hole of Yerralahlah pool, on the Canungra Creek, beckons.

and noisy pittas scurried from the track.

At the junction with the Toolona Creek Circuit we dumped our packs and continued 100 metres along the Border Track to Wanungara Lookout. Yet to be devoured by forest, it revealed another, final angle on the extinct volcano.

We left the Border Track once more, descending towards Toolona Creek. The procession of waterfalls began again at Poojabinya Falls, less than ten minutes from the junction.

Toolona Creek is arguably the showcase waterway of the National Park, descending so rapidly that the path snakes into switchbacks just to keep pace. Hemmed by thick rainforest and the banks draped in moss, its waterfalls seemed to grow in size with each

continued unbroken but the creek widened—a mountain brook no more—and its course flattened. It would be stretching the truth (as the maps do) to use the word waterfalls to describe its descents. They were tiny drops; cascades if I'm being kind. The falls were less interesting but, as though in compensation, the crossings were much more exciting.

'These are the best falls', he declared again, and it was the last time I would hear it, for Canungra Creek signalled a significant shift in the nature of the creeks.

The cavalcade of waterfalls continued unbroken but the creek widened—a mountain brook no more—and its course flattened. It would be stretching the truth (as the maps do) to use the word waterfalls to describe its descents. They were tiny drops; cascades if I'm being kind. The falls were less interesting but, as though in compensation, the crossings were much more exciting.

Only an hour from Brisbane, it's a pocket of the tropical dream that people chase as far as Cairns or Cape York, not realising that it can be found close to the capital city.



The track back to O'Reillys climbed for five kilometres and ascended 460 metres—higher than the Eiffel Tower or Empire State Building as a sign at the top warned the meek. Greg sprinted away, taking the challenge to the hill, but eased back to a low-range gear as the climb drew on through stands of red cedar, returning us to the Border Track for the last time.

Red-necked pademelons watched us pass, unperturbed, and the forest broke open into the clearing of O'Reillys, where lazy parrots chattered to their hand-feeding visitors. The direct heat of the sun came as a shock after the shield of the forest. It felt like Australia again.


aspiration *n* aim, ambition, desire, dream, goal, hope, objective, wish

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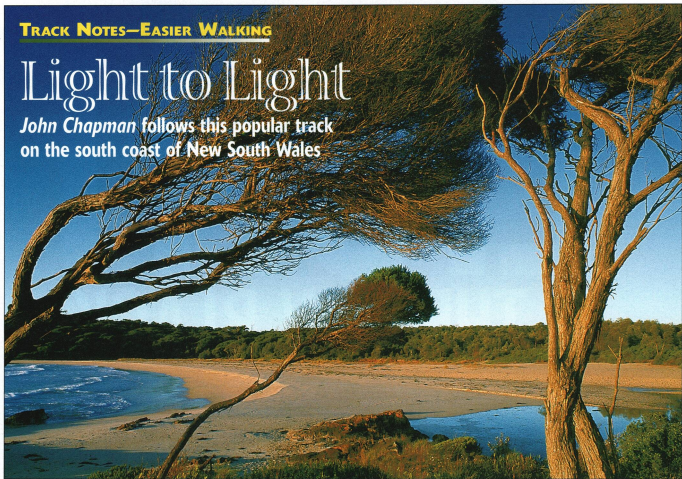
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Light to Light

John Chapman follows this popular track on the south coast of New South Wales



Saltwater Creek is approximately halfway between the two 'lights'. Paul Sinclair

THE SOUTHERN COASTLINE OF NSW PROVIDES SOME EXCELLENT, year-round walking. While much of it is for more experienced walkers, there is an enjoyable, easier walk between the two large capes south of Eden. This is known as the Light to Light walk, although strictly speaking this is not true—the tower at the northern end of the walk was not used as a navigation light for shipping. The suggested walk takes three half days, allowing plenty of time for fishing or exploring the interesting coastline. It can also be done as a medium grade, two-day walk with an overnight stop at the car-accessible camping area at Saltwater Creek. You need to book and pay for the use of this site. Fees and restrictions don't apply to the suggested camp-sites.

When to go

Rainfall in this area is evenly distributed throughout the year, so any time can be suitable. The popular seasons for this walk are spring, due to its wild flowers, and summer with its hot days that encourage swimming in the sheltered bays. Try to avoid the busy Christmas and Easter holiday periods.

Access

From Eden, head south along the Princes Highway for 18 kilometres, then turn right on to Edrom Road. Follow this for four and a half kilometres to the junction with Green Cape Road. To reach the start of the walk turn right and follow the road south-east for 18 kilometres to the car park near Green Cape; follow Edrom Road north-east for ten kilometres then turn left to Edrom Lodge to reach the walk's end. Parking is available near the lodge—ask the owners for permission if parking within the grounds. It's also possible to park near Boyds Tower. Shuttle services can be booked with Tony Grey of Malla-coota (phone 031 5158 0422) or Edwards Bus Lines at Eden (phone 021 6496 1422).

The walk

Before beginning the walk it's worth spending some time visiting the lighthouse and Green Cape. From the car park follow the walking track south around the lighthouse grounds, along the western side of the fence. There are wonderful views to the south and east across the ocean. A rough track follows the narrow crest of the cape past several ruined foundations, then descends steeply to the rock platform below. This is where the steamer *Ly-ee-Moon* was wrecked in 1886.

Return to the car park; to the right is the signposted start of the Light to Light walk. Follow the track north for 400 metres to the signposted sidetrack to the *Ly-ee-Moon* cemetery on the right. A plaque records the names of the unlucky crew and passengers who died and are buried here in unmarked graves.

Continue back to the main track and follow it north-west. Initially this passes through areas of dense heath popular with honey-eaters and other birds. After about half an hour the track crosses the gravel road to Pulpit Rock, then enters coastal forest. In summer the shade is appreciated! The track heads north then north-west to cross a larger creek where there is usually water. Continue north through light forest for a further two kilometres to the extensive picnic and camping area at Bittangabee Bay. Overnight camping is available here—fees apply and bookings are required for holiday periods.

Skirt the Bittangabee Bay camping area by keeping to the right and pass through the open forest above the nearby cliff. The track soon descends to the shore of Bittangabee Bay and a dilapidated building originally used to store supplies for the lighthouse before they were moved south to the cape.

Follow the rocky shore west for 200 metres and re-enter the bush to cross a small creek. The track soon passes the foundations of an old building, probably built by the Imlay brothers who settled the area in the 1840s. Cross another creek before swinging east

along the edge of open heath to the point on the north side of Bittangabee Bay.

Follow the rock platform north above the coastal cliff. There are sweeping views of the coast in both directions. Just before the rock platform ends veer left into she-oak forest; continue north and descend to Hegarty's Bay. There are good camp-sites north of the creek.

Day two

From the camp-site the track descends to the shore and follows the rocks north to the tiny creek at the northern end of the small bay. Pick up the track again as it rises through coastal forest on to the heath above the coastal cliffs, heading north then north-west with many excellent views of the coast in both directions. A gentle descent leads to a crossing of Woodburn Creek. Follow the sandy beach north-west for 500 metres to the start of a ridge just behind the shore. To the left is a lagoon and further left is the Saltwater Creek camping area; fees apply for camping here.

Continue along the walking track as it heads north up the low ridge at the northern end of the beach. After



Soaking up the view from Mowarr Point towards Eden.

John Chapman

few minutes there is a track junction: the sidetrack to the right leads to an arch formed by a collapsed sea cave. Continue left along the main track into the forest; this heads further inland than shown on the *Kiah* map. The track soon swings east and emerges on to moorland above the coast, then alternates between crossing moorland and the rocky platform above the coastal cliffs. This is a very scenic part of the walk and should not be rushed.

A gentle descent leads to a small bay 500 metres south of Mowarr Point. There is a camp-site here but water is not always available. The track then enters coastal forest giving easy walking to an excellent viewing point near Mowarr Point. It then heads west to a large opening that was previously farmland. The track can be hard to follow across the open land; keep to the left and follow the top edge of the opening east for 700 metres to a signpost on the western edge. This marks the start of a vehicle track; follow it west for 300 metres. Turn right just before the creek crossing and follow the gully down to the small bay. This is Farm Cove and it has excellent camping on the grassy bank behind the beach. Fresh water can be found upstream near the vehicle-track crossing.

Day three

Return to the vehicle track and follow it easily north-west through coastal forest for two and a half kilometres to Leather Jacket Bay. Turn right on a sidetrack and descend to the shore. Cross the creek and follow the stony shore north to the start of the walking track that rises gently to follow the top of the coastal cliffs north.



Continue from Leather Jacket Bay for one kilometre to meet a series of vehicle tracks above the next point. Turn left on to the vehicle track, ignoring the first two right-hand turns. Turn right on to the third track, which soon narrows to a walking track. From here it is pleasant walking through coastal forest. There are fine views of the coast as you approach Boys Tower.

The tower is an impressive building that was constructed by Benjamin Boyd as a prominent landmark and it marks the official end of the Light to Light walk. It must have been controversial as permission to use it as a lighthouse was refused and it was mainly used for spotting whales. Whales are common along the coast and some walkers might be lucky enough to see one. There is a fenced lookout below the tower that provides a good view of the coast just walked to the south. Follow a rough track north-east along the crest of Red Point for good views of Eden across Twofold Bay.

From Boys Tower, head south-west to the nearby car park. If finishing at Edrom Lodge follow the road for a kilometre, turn left and turn right soon after. Veer left when the road divides and descend to the entrance to Edrom Lodge. A public picnic- and parking area is on the left just before the entrance. A short walking track descends west to the nearby Fisheries Beach—this is a pleasant spot for a swim while waiting for transport. 🚶

See page 29 for John Chapman's bio.

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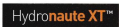
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Down and out

Jim Graham surveys down sleeping-bags

Wild Gear Surveys: what they are and what they're not

The purpose of *Wild Gear Surveys* is to assist readers in purchasing specialist outdoors equipment of the quality and with the features most appropriate for their needs; and to save them time and money in the process.

The cost of 'objective' and meaningful testing is beyond the means not only of *Wild*, but of the Australian outdoors industry in general and we are not aware of such testing being regularly carried out by an outdoors magazine anywhere in the world. Similarly, given the number of products involved, field testing is beyond the means of Australia's outdoors industry. *Wild Gear Surveys* summarise information, collate and present it in a convenient and readily comparable form, with guidelines and advice to assist in the process of wise equipment selection.

Surveyors are selected for their knowledge of the subject and their impartiality. Surveys are checked and verified by an independent referee, and reviewed by *Wild*'s editorial staff. Surveys are based on the items' availability and specifications at the time of the relevant issue's production; ranges and specifications may change later. Before publication each manufacturer/distributor is sent a summary of the surveyor's findings regarding the specifications of their products for verification.

Some aspects of surveys, such as the assessment of value and features—and especially the inclusion/exclusion of certain products—entail a degree of subjective judgement on the part of the surveyor, the referee and *Wild*, space being a key consideration.

'Value' is based primarily upon price relative to features and quality. A product with more elaborate or specialised features may be rated more highly by someone whose main concern is not price.

An important criterion for inclusion is 'wide availability'. To qualify, a product must usually be stocked by a number of specialist outdoors shops in the central business districts of the major Australian cities. With the recent proliferation of brands and models, and the constant ebb and flow of their availability, 'wide availability' is becoming an increasingly difficult concept to pin down.

Despite these efforts to achieve accuracy, impartiality, comprehensiveness and usefulness, no survey is perfect. Apart from the obvious human elements that may affect assessment, the quality, materials and specifications of any product may vary markedly from batch to batch and even from sample to sample. It is ultimately the responsibility of readers to determine what is best for their particular circumstances and for the use they have in mind for gear reviewed.

SLEEP IS OFTEN UNDERRATED AND UNDERVALUED. However, it's during our sleeping hours that the recovery process is at full tilt to restore and rebuild our physiological and psychological capacities. We need plenty of it after a hard day with the pack! This adds weight to the importance of a warm, comfortable place to do that sleeping.

This survey represents a selection of down sleeping-bags recommended for three-four season bushwalking. The products included in the table represent all price ranges of the market. More expensive models typically offer such features as highly water-resistant shells and higher-lofting down. Depending on the planned use this may or may not be necessary. Wise sleeping-bag selection is the result of careful consideration of your size,

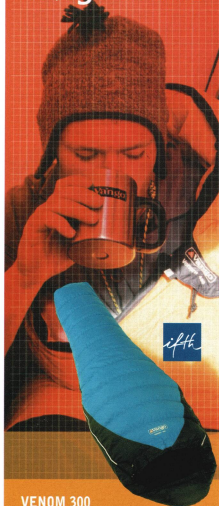
metabolism, usual sleeping position, desired pack weight, and the conditions in which the sleeping-bag will be used.

The last is the most difficult of these five considerations as people are generally aware of their size, sleeping temperature, and how much they move in their sleep. Gram counters will appreciate the research invested in fabric technology as there has been a reduction in the weights of most models in the table. However, the fifth consideration is a bit like selecting from Forrest Gump's chocolate box. You can study weather maps and listen to forecasts but in the great outdoors 'you don't always know what you're gonna get!' Serious bushwalkers shouldn't consider anything less than a three-season rated sleeping-bag as their primary choice. If you compromise on your comfort to

A good sleeping-bag will make the world of difference when you're out bush. Matthew Larcombe proves he's happy with his at Hanging Lake, Tasmania. Andrew Hughes



up here the
weather
 sets the tempo
 heart **beating**
 pulse racing, a race against time
 move up a **gear** and win ...



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satisfy a budget you'll have hours of restless nights to regret your decision.

Seasons

This is a loose guide to indicate the conditions for which a sleeping-bag is designed. A three-season sleeping-bag is designed to trap enough heat to keep its occupant comfortably warm in a tent in summer, autumn and spring. A three-plus rating brings winter camping below the snowline into the picture, while a four-season bag should allow adventures in the snow. Producing the heat to warm a sleeping-bag is a different matter; a low metabolism or an improperly sized sleeping-bag with too much 'dead space' can defeat the accuracy of this guide.

Buy right

- Be prepared to get inside sleeping-bags in the shop for a trial run. If they don't fit correctly try bags that come in a size for your needs.
- People with a higher metabolic rate will generally sleep warmer than someone with slower metabolism. Cold sleepers may have to choose a sleeping-bag with more fill, higher-quality down, a water-resistant shell or a closer-fitting profile. A bag liner—a lightweight, down-filled or fleece liner—can also be used to make your bags warmer. Silk and cotton versions are also available; any liner will reduce the frequency with which your bag needs to be washed.
- Don't buy a mummy bag before first trying one out. Will a mummy bag allow you to get into your usual sleeping position and still be comfortable?
- Check the style of stuff sack that the manufacturer provides. Compression sacks are now more common and are very practical.
- Check the length and placement of zippers. If the bag is to be used in all seasons then ventilation will be very important. Tapered rectangular shapes can even be fully opened out like a Doona.

Shape

Two sleeping-bag shapes are represented in this survey. Tapered rectangular bags have straight sides with a foot section that is slightly narrower than the throat. This gives more internal volume but the body also has more unused (or dead) space to heat. Mummy bags fill the upper-performance end of this survey due to their uncompromising lack of dead space. The design is contoured to hug the profile of a typical person lying on their back with their feet together. The tighter profiling also reduces the overall weight but restricts sleeping positions. Some of the tapered rectangular sleeping-bags in this survey, such as Mac-

pac's Latitude and Western Mountaineering's Hooded Aspen, have a narrower profile than others.

Fill and loft

Down has a natural ability to trap warmth. It is harvested from ducks and geese and can be purchased in different grades. The gradings are determined according to 'loft'—the measure of how much space in cubic inches one ounce of down fills. Duck down generally has a lower loft than goose down and will be found in entry-level down sleeping-bags. Around 700 grams of duck down is considered to be the starting-point for a three-season sleeping-bag. The same amount of goose down would give a slightly 'warmer' bag. There is variation in loft within down types and often there is even variation in the measured loft of down from the same batch: it is generally accepted that manufacturers quote the lowest sample recorded and that the same strict measurement standards are used across the board.

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) plan to soon introduce guidelines that change the way that local manufacturers can express the quality of down in their products. This will alter the way a bag's down content can be labelled and described, and prevent any item from being labelled as 100 per cent down. These guidelines were not consistently followed for all brands, leading to misleading results, so the table lists only the main fill type rather than giving a down/feather breakdown.

Loft height

When a sleeping-bag is removed from its stuff sack the down inside will begin to loft and the bag will swell in volume. A product with more down, or down of a higher quality, will loft more than another and this difference can be quantified. For the purpose



of this survey each sleeping-bag measured came from demonstration floor-stock in retail shops and was treated in the same way prior to measuring. The figures in the table indicate the height of the chest section of the upper shell above the floor and were consistently taken in the middle of the baffle 20 centimetres below the 'chin' line. This system is not without limitations; this value alone should not be used as the basis of a purchase decision.

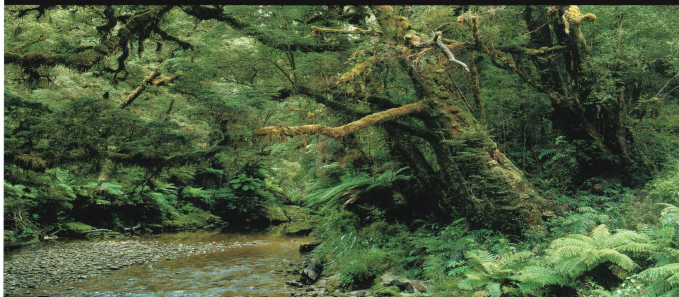
Down sleeping-bags

Seasons	Shape	Main fill type #	Fill weight, grams	Total weight, grams	Loft	Loft height, centimeters	Outer	Zip	Sizes	Design	Construction	Value	Comments	Approx price, \$	
Aurora Australia www.aurorasleepingbags.com.au															
Hotham	3	t	Goose	650	1400	750	17	Nylon	2, 5 T	S	●●1/2	●●●	●●●	240	
Hotham 2	3+	t	Goose	800	1700	750	19	Nylon	2, 5 T	S	●●1/2	●●●1/2	●●●1/2	280	
Black Wolf China www.blackwolf.com.au															
Vertical Limit 750	3	t	Goose	750	1700	650	16	Nylon	2, 5 T	S	●●●	●●●	●●1/2	440	
Fairydown China www.fairydown.co.nz															
Cobra f	3	t	Goose	700	1450	700	19*	Nylon	2 S	S, W, XL	●●●●	●●●1/2	●●●1/2	Also available with Gore DryLoft shell	500
Arete DryLoft t	4	m	Goose	600	1200	800	na	Gore DryLoft Lite	1 T	S, XL	●●●1/2	●●●1/2	●●●	650	
Scorpion	4+	m	Goose	700	1400	800	21	Gore DryLoft Lite	1 T	S, W, XL	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	750	
Kathmandu China www.kathmandu.com.au															
Pacesetter Pertex	3	m	Goose	550	1100	550	17	Pertex Endurance	3/4 T	S, XL	●●●1/2	●●●1/2	●●	Comes with an additional storage sack	630
Navigator Pertex	3	t	Goose	700	1600	550	16.5	Pertex Endurance	2, 5 T	S, XL	●●●	●●●	●●	As above	690
Moonraker Pertex t	4	m	Goose	760	1700	550	na	Pertex Endurance	1 T	S, XL	●●●	●●1/2	●●	As above	770
Macpac China www.macpac.co.nz															
Latitude 700 Loftpro	3+	t	Goose	700	1350	700	19	Reflex Loftpro	2 T	S, W, XL	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	Seam-sealed waterproof stuff sack	580
Epic 450 SF	3	m	Goose	450	850	725	13.5	Pertex Endurance	1/4 S	S, XL	●●●1/2	●●●1/2	●●●	Fully seam-sealed, ultralight waterproof bag	650
Sanctuary 700 XP	4	m	Goose	700	1280	750	21	Gore DryLoft	2 T	S, W, XL	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	Foot zip; seam-sealed waterproof stuff sack	700
Marmot China/USA www.marmot.com															
Helium	3+	m	Goose	625	920	900	16	Pertex Quantum	1/2 T	S, XL	●●●1/2	●●●1/2	●●●	Ultralight compact model	620
Mont Fiji www.mont.com.au															
Zodiac 700	3	t	Duck	700	1400	600	17	Nylon	2 T	S, XLW	●●●	●●●	●●●●	Compression sack; toaster foot-warmer	350
Brindabella	3+	t	Goose	700	1340	650	19	Nylon/ Hydronaut XT foot	2 T	S, W**, XLW	●●●1/2	●●●1/2	●●●●	Also available with full Hydronaut XT shell; compression sack; toaster foot-warmer	430
Spindrift	4	m	Goose	750	1650	700	21	Hydronaut XT	1 T	S, XLW	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	Compression sack; toaster foot-warmer	620
Mountain Designs China www.mountaindesigns.com															
Travelite 650	3	t	Duck	650	1650	550	15	Nylon	2, 5 T	S, XL	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●●	Zip wallet pocket; hidden pillow-slip; compression sack and storage sack	330
Dedos 600	3	m	Duck	600	1430	550	14	Nylon/ Stormloft foot	2, 5 T	S	●●●	●●●	●●●●	Three optional zip-on canopies for extra warmth and/or protection	370
Egger SL	4	m	Duck	800	1800	550	18	Stormloft	2, 5 T	S	●●●1/2	●●●1/2	●●●●	Zip-through box-foot section	500
One Planet Australia www.oneplanet.com.au															
Bush Lite	3	t	Goose	700	1500	700	18	Nylon	2 T	S, W, XLW	●●●●	●●●1/2	●●●●	Compression sack and built-in storage sack; also available with Epic shell	480
Bush Lite Super f	4	t	Goose	850	1650	700	21	Nylon	2 T	S, W, XLW	●●●●	●●●1/2	●●●●	As above	530
Epic Dandelion f	4	m	Goose	750	1620	700	21	Epic	1 T	S	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	Compression sack and built-in storage sack	650
Roman China www.roman.com.au															
Fight Advance 750	3	t	Duck	750	1500	550	15	Nylon	2 S	S, XL, XLW	●●●1/2	●●●	●●●1/2	Compression sack	350
Endurance 700	3+	t	Goose	700	1600	650	17	Pertex Endurance	2 S	As above	●●●1/2	●●●1/2	●●●1/2	As above	490
Snowgum China www.snowgum.com.au															
Couloir	3	t	Goose	550	1300	600	12	Nylon	2, 5 T	S	●●1/2	●●	●●●		270
Spindrift t	3	t	Goose	700	1580	600	na	Nylon	2, 5 T	S	●●1/2	●●	●●●		300
Western Mountaineering USA www.westernmountaineering.com															
Hooded Aspen	3	t	Goose	480	910	850	15	MicroLite XP	2 T	S, XL	●●●1/2	●●●1/2	●●1/2		750
Ultralite	4	m	Goose	395	750	850	16	Extremelitte	1 T	S, W, XL	●●●●	●●●1/2	●●●	Lightest bag in the survey	750
Apache DryLoft	4	m	Goose	540	1080	850	19	Gore DryLoft	1 T	S, W, XL	●●●●	●●●●	●●●		1050

● poor ●● average ●●● good ●●●● excellent **Shape:** mummy, tapered rectangular **Outer:** Epic, Extremelitte, Gore DryLoft and DryLoft Lite, Hydronaut XT, MicroLite XP, Pertex Endurance, Pertex Quantum, Reflex Loftpro and Stormloft are all highly water-resistant, breathable materials **Zips:** 1/4 zip, 1/2 zip, 3/4 zip, 1 zip, 2 zips, Single zip slide, Twin zip slides **Sizes:** Standard, Women's version, XL extra long, XW extra wide and long **#** new ACCC guidelines are to be introduced that will not allow local manufacturers (from Australia and New Zealand) to claim that fill is 100 per cent down on product labels. Main fill type lists only the main type of fill used, not the model's feather/down breakdown * measurement taken for DryLoft model ** women's version of this bag is called the Aurora na not available **Mont** and **Kathmandu** were preparing to release new models of their down sleeping-bag at the time of the survey. Specifications in the table are for the old models seen before October 2005 **f** not seen by surveyor **t** not seen by referee **The country** listed after the manufacturer/brand name is the country in which the products are made

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Fill weight and total weight

The trend towards lightweight equipment has had an obvious effect. At least two of the models featured in the table are well under a kilogram. Models weighing more than 1800 grams weren't considered for this survey as there isn't call to carry any-

Tech terms

- **European Temperature Rating Standard EN13537:** at present there isn't a single independent, objective method of assessing a sleeping-bag's warmth rating that all manufacturers have agreed to, making product comparison difficult. The EN13537 standard represents one possible benchmark in which three different temperature ratings are provided—comfort, limit of comfort and extreme. Macpac is one company that has had its sleeping-bags rated according to this standard; results can be found on their Web site.
- **Differential fill:** to optimise the use of down most sleeping-bags have less down in the base of the bag than in the top. (Down under a person is compressed by body weight and contributes little to warmth retention.) 'Bottomless bags' take this principle further: the base of these bags doesn't contain down but instead has a sleeve for inserting a sleeping-mat for insulation. These bags are compact but have limitations as to warmth and the sleeping positions they allow.
- **Baffles:** are the internal mesh walls used to divide the bag into smaller compartments. Good baffle-design allows the down to loft and controls its movement. Continuous baffles allow the down to be shifted between the top and bottom of the bag for increased comfort in a range of conditions. There are many types of baffles including horizontal, vertical, V-shaped, 'slant' wall, box wall and trapezoidal. Each design has various merits but a detailed discussion of baffles is outside the scope of this survey. More information can be obtained from manufacturer's Web sites or from staff at outdoors shops.

Outer

A variety of different fabric names are referred to in promotional catalogues and Web sites to describe shell materials and properties. These can become confusing and their properties are sometimes difficult to compare. Put simply, the shell materials range from nylon (high-tech to lower end) to laminates that are highly water-resistant, windproof and breathable. The more advanced fabrics have the ability to shed moisture, protecting

Sizes

Many manufacturers include models to suit people of different sizes. Women's models are also available in some bags: these are usually shorter and have slightly different fill weights and down distribution.

Design

This is a subjective assessment of how well the combined features of the bag could be expected to provide comfort, protection and insulation when used inside a shelter. The surveyor considered: the shape and placement of baffles and dividers; the positioning of draught tubes and neck muffs; the placement of zips and draw-cords; the contours of the bag and the shape of the hood.

Construction

This is another subjective assessment based on how well the features and materials are combined together in the finished product. This rating does not consider the price of the bag. The surveyor considered: the quality and cut of the stitching (excluding internal stitching as this wasn't possible to examine); the use of anti-sag zipper tapes; the quality of the down; the plumpness of the bag as measured; the quality of the materials used—zippers, outer and inner fabrics and draw-cords; and the overall size and weight of the bag in the stuff sack provided.

Value

This third subjective rating is used to weigh up design and construction against price. ●●



Three's a crowd:
*Fairydawn Arete (left),
Kathmandu Pacesetter and
Mont Spindrift sleeping-bags.*

thing exceeding this imposed upper limit of weight for normal bushwalking purposes. Weights were provided by the manufacturers and are unverified. If weight is of great importance to you, weigh the sleeping-bags with scales to get a precise measurement.

the down inside the bag to some degree. Materials that are water resistant also tend to trap heat better than nylon and are usually also windproof, resulting in a bag that is 'warmer'. However, they are generally more expensive.

Other brands available

Brand	Distributor	Contact
Coleman	Coleman Brands	1800 224 350
Exped	Proaktiv	(02) 9939 5611
Force Ten	Anso	(03) 9471 1500
GoLite		(03) 9894 4755
Mountain Equipment	Intertrek	(02) 9476 0672
Outdoor Expedition	Ray's Outdoors	(03) 5278 7633
Vango	Anso	(03) 9471 1500
Wild Country	Ray's Outdoors	(03) 5278 7633

As a professional outdoors educator and Duke of Edinburgh Award coordinator Jim Graham gets plenty of opportunities to put his sleeping-bag to the test. It has been used in a range of conditions in Victoria, Tasmania and New Zealand.

This survey was refereed by Greg Caile.



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lightweight A home on the range

Scott Edwards examines one-person shelters

Wild Gear Surveys: what they are and what they're not

(See box on page 57)

ONE-PERSON SHELTERS ARE AN ACQUIRED TASTE; some people find them claustrophobic, others liberating. There are benefits to sharing a tent but sometimes your personal space is incredibly precious after an arduous day. I've had some fantastic walking and back-country skiing trips when we've used bivvy-bags and small tents to make a little village. The only inhibitor to socialising is bad weather—solo shelters can be very lonely and depressing in such conditions. Despite this, they can be essential for long rockclimbs or mountaineering routes, or any other activity that might require emergency bivouacs. For light-and-fast trips in fine weather nothing comes close to the simplicity of a tarp and groundsheet. This combination is very light, has exceptional ventilation, room to move and few parts to break. In adverse weather a higher degree of protection is needed, such as that found in lightweight bivvy-bags.

This sounds great: a four-season shelter that packs into a stuff sack the size of a milk



It doesn't come much more lightweight than a DIY igloo! Stephen Bunton

side the sleeping area. The next improvement is double walls for improved ventilation and moisture transport: suddenly the one-person shelter is a tent and getting quite heavy! It's a challenge to find out which features are really important and which can be omit-

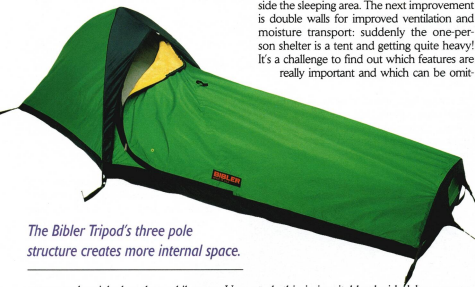
ments in the table were supplied by the distributor.

Weight

The weights in this table can vary considerably depending on the number of pegs and guy ropes carried. Considering the weight added to a soloist's rucksack, tents of two kilograms or less are ideal. Further weight savings can be made by reducing the size of the tent or using a bivvy-bag, some of which weigh less than a kilogram and almost fit into the palm of a hand. However, it is worth remembering that reducing the weight can reduce the features, size, fabric weather-proofing or strength.

Top-, fly- and under material

The tops of bivvy-bags and single-skin tents are generally constructed of waterproof, breathable fabrics; there are many examples in this survey. These fabrics keep the rain out while still allowing water vapour to escape. The base may be constructed of a similar material but the breathability of this is not as important. Good abrasion resistance and a reasonable price are more important factors to consider and a non-breathable, wa-



The Bibler Tripod's three pole structure creates more internal space.

carton and weighs less than a kilogram. Unfortunately, tight spaces are not always the most comfortable or practical places in which to cook, eat, change clothes, read a book, sleep or even breathe. The addition of a few poles increases comfort levels significantly by creating more space in which to move and also more air to breathe. Vestibules are also useful for keeping gear protected out-

ted—this is inevitably decided by your requirements for weight, cost, comfort and protection. Skimping because of weight or cost or ignoring particular features may end up giving you some of the most uncomfortable nights you're ever likely to have.

Ratings are given for within a category only and cannot be compared directly between the bivvy-bags and tents. All measure-

One-person shelters: bivvy-bags

	Weight, grams	Dimensions: length x height x foot, millimetres	Top material	Under material	No of poles	Peg loops	Tripole bags	Foot shape	Roominess	Ventilation	Range of use	Value	Comments	Approx price, \$
Bibler China www.bdel.com														
Bivvy Sack	695	2290 x 890 x 800	Toddrex	Nylon	0	N	N	Box	***	***	***	***	Wire hoop to keep bag off face	400
Bipod Bivvy f	830	2340 x 760 x 570	Toddrex	Nylon	1	Y	N	Box	***	***	***	***	Pole arch to provide more head room	500
Tripod Bivvy	1180	2240 x 860 x 570	Toddrex	Nylon	3	Y	Y	Box	***	***	***	*** 1/2	Three pole structure for increased interior space	630
Black Diamond China www.bdel.com f														
Lightstare Bivvy	620	2390 x 640 x 420	Epic	Nylon	2	Y	Y	Box	***	***	***	***	Highly breathable fabric for reduced condensation	370
Fairydown China www.fairydown.co.nz f														
Alpine Hydrepel Bivvy	770	2300 x 760 x 500	Hydrepel	Nylon	1	Y	Y	Box	***	***	***	***	Lightweight Delrin plastic pole can be packed up without removal	450
Bush Hydrepel Bivvy	900	2300 x 760 x 500	Hydrepel	Nylon	1	Y	Y	Box	***	***	***	***	As above	450
Alpine Gore-Tex Bivvy	730	2300 x 760 x 500	Gore-Tex	Nylon	1	Y	Y	Box	***	***	***	***	As above	550
Force Ten China www.fortentents.com f														
Alpine Bivvy	800	2300 x 750 x 400	Hytex	Nylon	0	Y	N	Mummy	***	***	***	***	Ventilation panels; repair kit included	350
Solo Bivvy Tent	1600	2750 x 950 x 400	Hytex	Nylon	2	Y	Y	Box	***	***	***	***	Vestibule; ventilation panels; repair kit included	435
Hennessy Hammocks USA www.hennessyhammock.com f														
Expedition Asym	1175	2500 x 1200	Polyester	Nylon	0	N	Y	na	**	***	**	***	Unique hammock-style bivvy; webbing straps to protect tree bark	200
Ultralight Backpacker Asym	880	2500 x 1200	Nylon	Nylon	0	N	Y	na	**	***	**	***	Hammock style; very lightweight	260
Explorer Deluxe Asym	1300	2700 x 1200	Polyester	Nylon	0	N	Y	na	***	***	**	***	Hammock style; increased length and space for taller users	280
Macpac Vietnam www.marpac.co.nz														
Alpine Cocoon	600	2180 x 470 x 470	Reflex 2.5	Reflex 2.5	0	N	N	Mummy	***	***	***	***	Very lightweight; 3D hood for head space; polyester gear storage; side zip	300
Astro Cocoon f	1600	2110 x 470 x 470	Reflex UV	Nylon	2	Y	Y	Box	***	***	***	***	Three-four season shelter; rear window for air flow	400
Mont Australia www.mont.com.au														
Hibernator SL	770	3150 x 900 x 440	Hydranaut	Hydranaut Pro	0	Y	Y	Box	***	***	***	***	3D shaped; wide box foot for increased space	400
Mountain Designs China www.mountaindesigns.com														
Bolthole	1290	2400 x 1000 x 500	Repel	Nylon	2	Y	Y	Box	***	***	***	***	Poles for increased interior space; vent for improved air flow	500
Roman China www.roman.com.au f														
Sentry Bivvy	465	2100 x 800 x 450	Dryheat	Nylon	0	N	Y	Box	***	***	***	***	Lightweight; weatherproof vent for increased ventilation	210
Centurion Bivvy	850	2100 x 850 x 450	Dryheat	Nylon	2	Y	Y	Box	***	***	***	***	Poles for increased interior space	280

terproofed nylon or polyester is more commonly used. Common waterproof coatings are PVC, polyurethane, silicon, or a combination of these. Fly fabrics use similar coatings but lighter materials. The majority of tents have a double-wall or double-skin construction; a breathable mesh or taffeta-nylon inner protected by a waterproof fly. Water vapour passes through the breathable inner and circulates or condenses on the inside of the fly. Good ventilation will significantly reduce vapour build-up and steep-sided walls also help to shift condensation away.

Insect screens

Insect screens are essential in most temperate or tropical climates, mosquitoes being a major pest that is sometimes dangerous as well. All bivvy-bags in

the survey have insect screens; some other alpine-style bivvy-bags dispense with screens, their need being limited in cold, high-altitude environments. The lack of insect screens in hammock- and tarpaulin-

style tents may require the use of a mosquito-net, a fairly inexpensive and lightweight solution.

Peg- and tie loops

Pegging out a bivvy-bag or tent ensures stability in bad weather and a tighter structure for shedding rain. Some bivvy-bags have tie loops that can be used to hold up the head area if there is something to which they can be tied. Walking poles, ski poles and skis can also be used with guy ropes to create simple or elaborate structures for tie-points.



The Salewa Micra one-person tent.

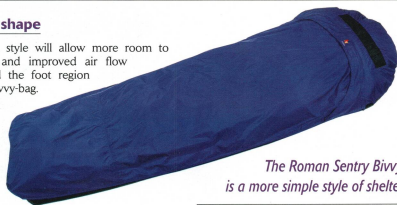
One-person shelters: tents

	Weight, grams	Dimensions: length x width x height, millimetres	Fly material	No. of poles	Insect screen	Peg loops	Pole loops	Roominess	Ventilation	Range of use	Value	Comments	Approx. price, \$
Black Diamond China www.bdet.com £													
Firstlight	1440	2080 x 1230 x 1230	Epic	2	Y	Y	Y	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	Single-skin tent; highly breathable fabric for reduced condensation; optional vestibule available	600
Black Wolf China www.blackwolf.com.au £													
Mantis 1	1900	2550 x 1000 x 800	Polyester	2	Y	Y	Y	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	Dual side entries; head and foot vents	190
Eureka China www.eureka-europe.com													
Moonshadow Solo	2100	2340 x 860 x 800	Polyester	2	Y	Y	Y	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	Vents on fly and door for increased air flow	220
Kathmandu China www.kathmandu.com.au													
Ora	1920	2100 x 1000 x 950	Polyester	2	Y	Y	Y	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	Colour-coded poles for easy pitching; head and foot vents for air flow; side entrance	380
Macpac Vietnam www.marpac.co.nz													
Microlight	2000	2200 x 1300 x 1000	Polyester	1	Y	Y	Y	●●●1/2	●●●	●●●	●●●	Lightweight 'fly and pole only' pitching option	500
MSR China www.msrcorp.com													
Microzoid 1	1100	2500 x 900 x 700	Polyester	2	Y	Y	Y	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	Lightweight; can be used as bivvy-bag; optional vestibule/awning available	390
Zoid 1	1300	2800 x 1000 x 860	Polyester	2	Y	Y	Y	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	Vestibule/awning	430
Hubba	1300	2200 x 700 x 1000	Nylon	1	Y	Y	Y	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	Free-standing for improved head room; clever pole system with four sections interconnected as one pole	530
Mountain Designs China www.mountaindesigns.com													
Neutro 1	1445	2400 x 1100 x 1000	Nylon	2	Y	Y	Y	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	Lightweight, minimalist style tent	400
Salewa China www.salewa.com £													
Micra	2300	2120 x 1200 x 1020	Polyester	2	Y	Y	Y	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	Very roomy and stable design	350
Sea to Summit Vietnam www.seatosummit.com.au													
Dart	2200	2400 x 750 x 830	Polyester	3	Y	Y	Y	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	Very roomy and well ventilated; stable design	400
Overhang Tarp	720	2000 x 3000	Polyester	0	N	N	Y	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	A tarp style for the true minimalist; guy ropes and pockets included	120
Sierra Designs China www.sierradesigns.com													
Lightyear	1600	2870 x 1110 x 970	Nylon	2	Y	Y	Y	●●●1/2	●●●	●●●	●●●	Very lightweight	280
Snowgum China www.snowgum.com.au													
Micro Flash	1780	2400 x 960 x 600	Polyester	2	Y	Y	Y	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	Can be pitched fly first or as one for fly only; pockets for guy ropes; large storage space	250
Vango China www.vango.co.uk £													
Microlite 100	1500	2100 x 950 x 950	Nylon	1	Y	Y	Y	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	Can be pitched fly first or as one; repair kit included	300

● poor ●● average ●●● good ●●●● excellent **Material:** Dryheat, Epic, Gore-Tex, Hydratech Pro, Hyltex, Reflex, Repel and Toddrex are all said to be waterproof, breathable fabrics not applicable £ not seen by referee The country listed after the manufacturer/brand name is the country in which the products are made

Foot shape

A box style will allow more room to move and improved air flow around the foot region of a bivvy-bag.



The Roman Sentry Bivvy is a more simple style of shelter.

Roominess

Bivvy-bags with poles allow more breathing room and gear space. Tents offer the most comfort, especially models with high peaks. Being able to sit up, stretch, move around and change clothes is much more comfortable than being stuck in a sack.

Ventilation

Increased internal space also allows for better air flow, reducing the build-up of stale air—something difficult to achieve in smaller tents or bivvy-bags. Moisture dispersal and removal is another concern and is handled best by double-skin designs with large inter-

Other brands available

Brand	Distributor	Contact
Doite	MB Wrapp	(03) 9310 4696
Exped	Proaktiv	(02) 9939 5611
Marmot	LA Imports	(02) 9913 7833
Outdoor Research	Intertrek	(02) 9476 0672
Vaude	Rucsac	info@rucsac.com.au Supplies

ior spaces. It is also worth considering how well a shelter can be ventilated in bad weather when zips and doors are closed tight. Bivvy-bags and even tents can become coffins in such conditions; always make sure

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A person in a red sleeveless shirt and black shorts is climbing a dark, craggy rock face. They are hanging by their arms, with their legs extended. The background is a clear blue sky.
silkspun sleeveless crew top **silkspun**



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Scirocco - silver fern

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there is fresh air to breathe. Snow-camping can be particularly dangerous as small structures are easily buried in blizzards. Excessive ice build-up on vents and zips can also reduce air flow and possibly close off the only escape route. It's hard to cut through a coffin of ice-hardened fabric when stuck under a large dump of snow!

Buy right

- Think hard about the features that are really important and the weather conditions in which the shelter will mostly be used.
- Try before you buy. Don't buy a bivvy-bag or micro-tent until you know you can sleep in something that small. They're not for everyone.
- How waterproof is it? Make sure there are very few entry points for water penetration, but remember you will still need some vents for air. All critical seams should be seam-taped.
- Interior space: is it long, high or wide enough?
- What size sleeping-mat will fit in it? The choices can be limited—sometimes three-quarter mats are a better choice.
- Equipment storage: is there protective cover inside or outside?
- Vestibules are the bare minimum required for cooking; don't try to cook in the tent or bivvy. There just isn't enough air to go around and naked flames and synthetic fabrics don't have a happy union.
- Weight can vary considerably depending on how many pegs, poles, guy ropes or inners are carried. To shave off grams, take a set of hand scales to measure the full weight, then start dumping components. Compromises in stability and weather protection may need to be made.

Range of use

Some bivvy-bags and tents can be used in all conditions due to their structural simplicity or durability but may not be particularly comfortable in many. The features of a product need to match the conditions in which it will be mostly used. Hot weather requires opening the windows while winter storms require closing all the hatches. Good ventilation can be at the expense of adequate weatherproofing.

Value

This subjective rating is determined by taking into consideration such qualities as design, materials and construction in relation to the retail price. 📊

Scott Edwards likes to walk or ski around the Australian Alps using the lightest gear available. He then contradicts this philosophy by trying to pack in as much gourmet food and drink as possible. He believes in consuming the lot before the walk out.

This survey was refereed by Zac Zaharias.

No go, H₂O.



Vertex

Fairydown's Vertex pack is formidably waterproof. Its "dry-bag" roll top, and seam-sealed liners send water scattering. At just 1.55kgs, with a lightweight contour harness, and deceptively large capacity it's one of the most versatile and downright handy packs around. Combine it with Fairydown's Axiom tent at 1.75kgs, Superlite Taffeta Sleeping Bag - 0.78kgs and Vertigo Jacket - 0.37kgs and you've got a total weight of just 4.45kg for a tent, pack, sleeping bag, and jacket!!

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Boil over

Jetboil is making waves with an innovative new stove called the **Personal Cooking System**. The cooker is powered by isobutane/propane canisters and utilises sophisticated heat-transfer technology, with the accompanying one litre cup used as the cooking vessel. It snaps securely into the burner unit, which is stored inside the cup for packing. The stove is said to be lightweight, compact and capable of boiling a cup of water in 60 seconds, which is then kept hot by the mug's neoprene insulation. Judging by the list of glowing testimonials it seems that this funky stove has changed people's lives. For more information contact **Sea to Summit** on 1800 787 677. RRP \$179.

MSR has added to their range of stoves with the **XGK-EX**, which they describe as 'a multi-fuel blowtorch'—perfect for those who just can't fit soldering equipment into their pack! The stove is said to be the fastest, most reliable high-altitude stove available and burns Shellite, kerosene, diesel, aviation gas, jet fuel and unleaded petrol. It differs from the XGK in a number of ways including having a flexible fuel line to enable easier packing, and retractable legs and pot supports for extra stability. The stoves are distributed by **Spelean**. RRP \$245. Contact them on 1800 634 853.

Kathmandu join in with the powerful yet diminutive new butane stove called the **Arcus**. With piezo ignition and durable pot supports the stove has a claimed weight of 156 grams without the gas. Cranking at 11 000 BTU, it is claimed to boil a litre of water in just over four minutes while also being capable of simmering low and steady for the risotto aficionados. Visit www.kathmandu.com.au for more information. RRP \$109.90.

The cup/cooking vessel, burner unit and gas canister are integrated in the Jetboil stove.



NEW TENTS and variations on old classics

Your toothbrush handle is safe from the lightweight purge! **Fairydown** has come up with the versatile **Axiom** tent which is claimed to sleep two comfortably and weigh only 1.75 kilograms as a full unit. If it is pitched with trekking poles or strung from trees in its fly-only manifestation it becomes a four-person emergency shelter that weighs a measly 750 grams. RRP \$399. See www.fairydown.co.nz for more information.

Also advocating the 'light is right' philosophy, **Salewa** has overhauled a stalwart

of their tent range. The **Sierra Leone Ultra** has been redesigned with the input of 'Australian tent experts' and is claimed to retain the stability and popular features of this classic while cutting the weight considerably to 2.48 kilograms (excluding extras). Contact **Intertrek** for more information on (02) 9476 0672. RRP \$569.

Macpac's renowned **Minaret** has had some tweaking with the addition of a new floor fabric, **Torrentwear XP**. Said to be thirty per cent lighter than the previous floor fabric, it shaves nearly 250 grams off the overall weight while remaining as tough as ever. RRP \$749. For more details visit www.macpac.co.nz



The Fairydown Axiom sheds its layers in a family-friendly striptease.

The silver (or at least dry!) lining

New lightweight **dry bags** and **pack liners** from **Sea to Summit** are made from Ultra-Sil, a 30-denier, seam-taped, siliconised Cordura, which is claimed to be not only light but tough and slippery too, making packing easier. The pack liners are extra long so that even when your pack is full you can still use the roll-top closure. The 20 litre dry bag weighs 50 grams while the 60-70 litre pack liner is 110 grams; RRP \$33.95 and \$39.95, respectively.

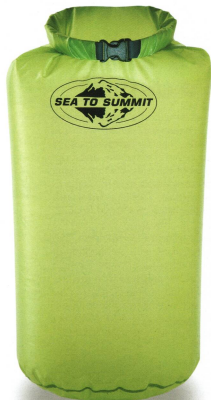
The new **Dry Compression Sack range** is claimed to be a world first: a combination roll-top dry bag and compression sack that uses a waterproof, breathable fabric (eVENT) in the base instead of valves or other hardware. It

seems perfect for keeping down sleeping bags or clothing dry and compact and comes in five sizes. RRP from \$33. Phone Sea to Summit for more information.

Ever lost something in the bottom of a stuff sack? It'll never happen again with the **Storm Compression Series** from **Black Wolf**. Built from 70-denier Ripstop nylon, they are said to be lined with a super-strong PU coating, have welded seams and a clear vinyl window (so that's where the blueberry muffins are...) and a compression valve for expelling air to minimise bulk. Who needs to carry all that extra air around anyway? RRP range from \$34.95 to \$54.95 for models from five- to 60 litres in capacity. Contact **Phoenix Leisure Group** for more information on (02) 9667 0899.

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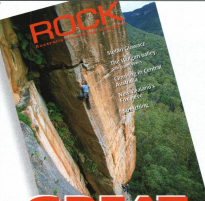


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Footwear: from the hard core to the hard floor

Montrail's new **track-running shoe**, the **Hardrock**, has the adventure-racing community all fired up. Said to be light enough to be a trainer yet sturdy due to its full-length, moulded protection plate, it has an aggressive rubber sole, external heel-cup for stability, and has been winning awards and races in the USA. More importantly it has passed the test on the Overland Track and the Western Arthurs. Available in wide widths, too. RRP \$179 from **Sea to Summit**.

New on the scene are the yachty-inspired **Crocs**. They are a cross between a thong and a clog—rotate the heel strap to transform them into an adventure sandal. Made from Patented Closed Cell Resin (PCCR), they are claimed to be anti-microbial, preventing the bacteria and fungus that inhabit so many shoes and sandals from setting up shop. They are said to be extremely light, grippy and comfortable, and great for water sports as they even

float! See www.crocs.com for more information. RRP \$49.95.

Also trying to keep the smell at bay with its leather upper, XEGIS Microbe Shield and ample ventilation is the **Taos** from **Keen**. Offering great (patented) toe protection, dual-density EVA mid-sole and a removable foot-bed, the Taos appear to be burly, hybrid footwear. Contact **Lifestyle Industries Group** on (03) 9836 3833. RRP \$230.

Crocs don't only float, they also make you stand out in a crowd!



trix

Clean cooking

The smart way to keep your cookware shiny,
by Tom Oliver

Cooking with stoves or Trangias tends to blacken your valuable pots. This is messy and puts unnecessary wear and tear on your pots and pans. Put some dish-washing liquid on the base of your pan so it forms a layer between the flame and the bottom of the pot to prevent this occurring. It will not affect the cooking time.

Wild welcomes readers' contributions to this section; payment is at our standard rate. Send them to the address at the end of this department.

Knick-Knacks

Write yourself a clean drink

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cluding the charming giardia and cryptosporidium. It is light and compact and won't leave your drink tasting of iodine. One 90-second blast will purify one litre of water. In filtering terms, that's fast! Contact Sea to Summit for more details. RRP \$299.

Shine on

Claimed to be one of the lightest and most compact lanterns on the market, the Kathmandu Eos has piezo ignition and throws a 60 watt light. It uses lighter gas, or it can be filled from standard butane canisters with the Fill Adaptor (sold separately). You can apparently use it at its brightest or achieve candle-like ambience that will impress those romantically inclined. RRP \$119.90.

For those who don't like dehydrated foods on long trips, the FoodSaver vacuum-packaging system from Sunbeam allows you to take whatever you like (well, almost). It is claimed to keep your food fresh for up to five times longer than food that hasn't been vacuum-packed, allow marinades to penetrate your food quickly, and rid your pack of leaky bags—saucy sleeping-bags are a thing of the past! See www.sunbeam.com.au for more information. RRP from \$179.

A tent by any other name...

Wilderness Equipment tents are no more, under that name anyway. You'll now find them under their new Sea to Summit branding but with the same model names and prices. Rucksacks and gaiters will still bear the WE moniker. ☹

New and innovative products of relevance to the rucksack sports fan (see to Wild) and/or information about them, including high-resolution digital photos (on CD, not by email) or colour slides, are welcome for possible review in this department. Written items should be typed, include recommended retail prices and preferably not exceed 200 words. Send them to Wild, PO Box 415, Ffahran, Vic 3181 or contact us by email: editorialadmin@wild.com.au

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THE WILDERNESS SOCIETY

LOGGING POLICIES, STUFF UPS AND THE OCCASIONAL BIT OF GOOD NEWS

From New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia

Greens Senator Bob Brown has taken Forestry Tasmania to court over logging in the Wielangta area on Tasmania's east coast. According to the spring 2005 *Potoroo Review*, the case hinges on the fact that clear-felling is able to bypass federal environmental protection (under the *Environment Protection & Biodiversity Conservation Act*) in all areas covered by a Regional Forests Agreement (RFA). Without this exemption, an environmental impact assessment would be needed before logging. The argument goes further: it is claimed that an RFA isn't



an RFA if it doesn't fulfil its purpose by protecting threatened species, such as the Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle, swift parrot and Wielangta stag beetle found in the area under dispute. The case was due to begin on 17 October and, if successful, may have wide-reaching ramifications.

In Victoria the Native Vegetation Management Framework (NVMF) became government policy three years ago. The framework's guidelines outline the exact process that needs to be followed if a patch of bush is to be cleared. However, the Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA) report that there still aren't clear deadlines for the adoption of these guidelines, allowing misinterpretation. According to the *Potoroo Review*, under the framework a private landowner who destroyed native vegetation without a permit would be fined and forced to rehabilitate up to 15 times the area that was destroyed. However, the department whose duty it is to enforce this regulation, the Department of Sustainability & Environment (DSE), is exempt from it.



Left, Friends of the Earth staged a heated protest to highlight the destruction of Barmah State Forest. **Eli Greig.** **Above,** the aftermath of illegal logging in Errinundra National Park. **Madeline Hudson**

Eli Greig reports that the Victorian Government agency VicForests has admitted that it accidentally marked an area of Errinundra National Park in East Gippsland for clear-felling by logging contractors. Many old-growth trees were cut down within the park. Fiona York from the Goongerah Environment Centre says that buffer zones near National Park boundaries are needed to provide the requisite protection for the edges of reserved ecosystems. This mistake follows the release of a report into the illegal logging of Snowy River National Park during the 2003 bushfires outlined in the Green Pages in *Wild* no 98.

In a further breach of forest protection 60 per cent of a special protection zone for the superb parrot, a nationally threatened species, was clear-felled, destroying 15 per cent of the bird's total remaining habitat. The logging occurred in the Barmah State Forest on the Murray River, the world's largest river-red-gum forest and wetland, just before the migratory species was due to arrive. Megan Clinton reports that Victorian Environment Minister John Thwaites will instruct the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) to audit these breaches in the Barmah State Forest and the Errinundra National Park. The EPA is also expected to consider possible penalties.

In good news for the river-red-gum wetlands, the VNPA report that the owners

of Chowilla Station near Renmark in SA have come to an agreement with the Government to stop grazing on the flood plain on their property. The flood plain is one of six 'icon sites' identified by the Living Murray, a study into the Murray River's health, along with the Barmah-Millewa Forest and Gunbower-Perricoota Forest in NSW. Conservationists are calling for the end of grazing and logging in these areas and the formation of a series of National Parks and conservation reserves to protect the river-red-gum forests.

In March 2003 a suspension was placed on logging in 12 NSW forests recognised by The Wilderness Society (TWS) as icon forests. TWS report that this moratorium was lifted in January 2005, with five of the 12 areas now targeted for logging. The first bulldozers rolled into the Cathcart State Forest near Bombala in early October, with Tallaganda the next on the list. In good news, new National Park areas were created in upper Deua, Monga and Murrumbidgee in southern NSW in October. However, according to Greens MLC Ian Cohen this is only a fraction of what is needed.

▲ Act now

Visit www.wilderness.org.au and fill in a petition to protect the icon forests of NSW.

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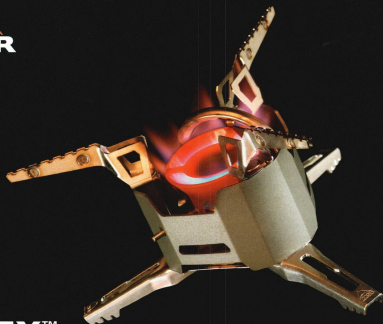
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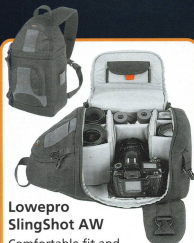
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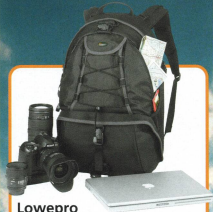
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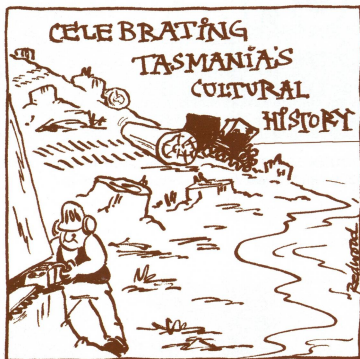
LOGGING IN TASMANIA

Eli Greig and others report that it's not all quiet on the southern front

Eli Greig reports that logging is set to proceed at Recherche Bay in Tasmania, the historical site of early contact between French explorers and indigenous Australians, following a decision by the Federal Government. The site will be listed on

the impact on the forests potentially up to 2038', he said.

After the first referral TWS began legal action to force the Commonwealth to consider native forests as part of the assessment. At the time of writing they were



the National Heritage List, yet still open for logging. Conservationists are worried that what remains of this critical time in Australian history may be lost under the tracks of a bulldozer. (See the review of Bob Brown's book about the area in this issue.) Federal Environment Minister Senator Ian Campbell does not believe that logging will damage heritage values.

The pulp mill planned for Bell Bay in the north of the State was granted 'controlled action status' by the Federal Government in October. This decision allows Tasmania's Resource Planning & Development Commission to assess the project on behalf of the Commonwealth, permitting the stalled approval process to resume. This was the second time the proposal had been referred to the government; the first referral was withdrawn in August.

TWS's Vica Bailey was disappointed that there would be no assessment of the wood supply needed, given that the Regional Forests Agreement will run out in the first ten years of the mill's life. This pulp mill has requested 30-year access to Tasmania's native forests, so that brings

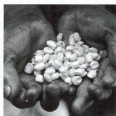
considering whether to again initiate legal proceedings.

In an interesting development a young cadet journalist states he was sacked after researching and writing stories about the pulp mill for the Launceston newspaper the *Examiner*. The journalist said he received orders from management not to write the story but later received support from senior staff. However, after publication he was dismissed. Greens Senator Christine Milne made a speech in Parliament about this issue and 'the culture of fear, intimidation and menace that currently exists in Tasmania as a means of maintaining the power of the forest industry in Tasmania'.

The spring *Potoroo Review* reports that Gunns Ltd was given a third opportunity to lodge its \$7 million claim against the 'Gunns 20'-TWS and 19 other groups and individuals being sued for losses allegedly incurred due to the defendants' anti-logging campaigns (see Green Pages in *Wild* no 98). Gunns has been ordered to pay the legal costs that the 20 defendants have incurred so far. A directions hearing for the case was planned for December.

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WORLD HERITAGE

straining at the leash

By Geoff Mosley and others

Australia's 16 World Heritage sites are proof that our nation has been a leader in this international conservation field. However, the impetus appears to have ground to a halt leaving many places of outstanding significance without the protection they deserve, and several others incomplete in terms of boundaries or listed values.

corridor, it would also link three other significant corridors: the coast, the great escarpment and the alps. Nearly 400 kilometres in length and 200 kilometres deep, this proposal has been given a new lease of life by the Victorian Government's decision not to renew grazing licences in the Alpine National Park (see Green Pages in

diverse places on earth. In spite of a firm election promise the WA Government is giving this second place to a nomination in the Cape Range-Ningaloo Reef area.

Two of the ACF proposals—the Nullarbor and the Eastern Arid Zone—have been held back by cross-border disagreements, while Cape York Peninsula is the scene of



The 'sea to snow' corridor would stretch from East Gippsland's coast to the alps. Left, Shipwreck Creek, Croajingalong National Park, Victoria. Right, near Carruthers Peak, Kosciuszko National Park, NSW. Both photos Geoff Mosley

There isn't a lack of community interest in new nominations or renominations; however, the government seems reluctant to take action. One obstacle is that the Howard Government 'as a general principle' requires areas to be on the National Heritage List (established January 2004) before they are nominated for the World Heritage List. This is supposed to work in reverse for existing World Heritage Areas (WHAs) but, in a sign of how slowly things move, only one of the 16 existing WHAs (Melbourne's Exhibition Building) has been transferred to the National Heritage List.

Australia has only two sites on its official Tentative List of places of potential World Heritage significance, the Sydney Opera House in its Harbour Setting and Australian Convict Sites. The Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) believe there are at least eight other places that should be nominated (see box).

Of these, the most challenging is the site that goes under the name of 'Australian Alps and South-east Forests'. While this proposal is essentially based on a 'sea to snow'

Australia's World Heritage Areas

- 1 Great Barrier Reef (1981)
- 2 Kakadu National Park (1981—Stage One, 1987—Stage Two and 1992—Stage Three)
- 3 Willandra Lakes Region (1981)
- 4 Tasmanian Wilderness (1982, extended in 1989)
- 5 Lord Howe Island Group (1982)
- 6 Central Eastern Rainforest Reserves (Australia) (1986, extended 1994)
- 7 Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park (1987: natural values; 1994: cultural landscape)
- 8 Wet Tropics of Queensland (1988)
- 9 Shark Bay, WA (1991)
- 10 Fraser Island (1992)
- 11 Australian Fossil Mammal Sites (Riversleigh/Naracoorte) (1994)
- 12 Heard and McDonald Islands (1997)
- 13 Macquarie Island (1997)
- 14 The Greater Blue Mountains Area (2000)
- 15 Purnululu National Park, WA (2003)
- 16 Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens, Melbourne (2003)

Wild no 98). The main test is whether the four responsible governments are capable of cooperating: in the wake of the grazing decision Victoria, the Australian Capital Territory and NSW have all declared their support for the nomination but the Commonwealth has been distracted by the cattlemen's claims (see page 79).

Another worthwhile potential nomination is a site in south-western Western Australia that is one of the most biologically

World Heritage Areas proposed by the ACF

- 1 Cape York Peninsula (1977)
- 2 Prince Regent River and Kimberley (1977)
- 3 Eastern Arid Zone including Channel Country (1977)
- 4 Wild-flower Region, south-west WA (1977)
- 5 Antarctica (1977)
- 6 Australian Alps (1987) and South-east Forests (1991)
- 7 Nullarbor (1989)
- 8 North-west Tasmania (Tarkine) (1989)

There are also proposals for extension and/or additional values for Great Barrier Reef, Fraser Island (Great Sandy), Tasmanian Wilderness, Greater Blue Mountains, and Kakadu.

a saga involving the resolution of Aboriginal land rights. The possibility of a World Heritage site in Antarctica is the most intriguing, although perhaps the most difficult.

Among the existing WHAs that have inadequate boundaries, the most obvious is Fraser Island: the area covers only one-fifth of the Great Sandy Area nominated in 1991. In 1992 the Queensland Government promised to work for the nomination of the remainder but has yet to fulfil its promise. The Tasmanian Wilderness WHA is still only two-thirds complete. It is now being reconsidered by conservation groups and would rationally incorporate the Tarkine area.

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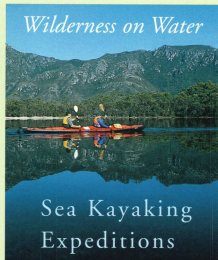
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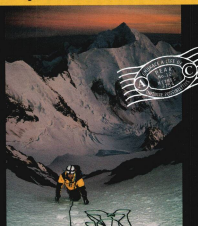
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cow collars and Aussie heritage

Andrew Cox reports that in a move to tempt the Victorian Government to reverse its recent decision to ban alpine grazing, Senator Ian Campbell offered to place the Victorian, NSW and ACT alpine National Parks on the National Heritage List and assess them for World Heritage nomination. This was conditional on the reintroduction of grazing in the Victorian Alps. Other elements of the proposed \$15 million plan included fencing, satellite-tracking cow collars that issued electric shocks if cattle strayed from designated grazing areas, two cultural centres, new horse-riding routes and a yearly cattle drive through the National Park.

The Victorian, NSW and ACT National Parks Associations that originally presented the tri-state park and World Heritage listing proposal to the Federal Government earlier in 2005 rejected this proposal, as did the Victorian Government.

According to the *Age* on 16 October, the Australian Heritage Council (AHC) rejected Senator Campbell's application for heritage listing of the Alpine National Park, aimed to protect grazing, and instead recommended that the entire alpine area be considered for heritage listing. Senator Campbell agreed to ask the AHC to assess the whole area for the National Heritage List, which could lead to World Heritage listing.

DINOSAUR BREATHES MORE FIRE AND BELCHES MORE SMOKE

Hazelwood power station gets another lease of life



Putting the spotlight on the pollution emitted by Hazelwood power station. Greenpeace

Hazelwood power station in the Latrobe Valley is one of the world's dirtiest power stations (see *Wild* no 96). According to Environment Victoria (EV), prior to the 40-year-old plant's privatisation the former State Electricity Commission had planned to retire Hazelwood this year. Instead the Victorian Government has allowed it to remain open until 2030 and has given it access to a further 43 million tonnes of brown coal. Brown coal produces significantly more carbon dioxide than other fuel sources due to its high water-content. The winter 2005 *Potoroo Review* reports that the expanded mine will cover some 1454 hectares, forcing

the relocation of 11 families, the town of Driffield, part of the Strzelecki Highway, and a secondary road. Flows in the Morwell River and two nearby creeks will also have to be redirected.

EV reports that the plant has been given a pollution cap of 445 million tonnes (equivalent to putting 105 million cars on the road for a year), which would allow the plant to continue to operate until 2030 at current emission levels. Emission-reduction targets were set out in the deal; however, these are voluntary. Environment groups also fear that the plant will be made exempt from controls by future State governments.

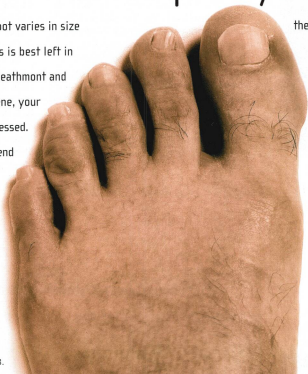
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Water flows and woes

Conservation news about rivers around the country



Bundanoon Creek in Morton National Park would be inundated if plans to raise Lake Yarrunga go ahead. Vanessa Blake

Environment groups in Queensland are celebrating the passage of the historic *Wild Rivers Act 2005* into law (see Green Pages in *Wild* no 98). TWS report that the legislation protects nominated rivers from the construction of large dams, weirs and levees and the expansion of damaging irrigation practices.

The Queensland Government intends to protect 19 river systems by the end of 2006, most of these in the Cape York Peninsula and Gulf of Carpentaria regions. The government can also choose to nominate other rivers, leading to public consultation and a decision as to whether the river catchment is a 'wild river'.

The Shoalhaven River Alliance report that the Ettrema Wilderness, one of NSW's most popular outdoors recreation areas, faces flooding if a proposal to increase water storage in Lake Yarrunga goes ahead. The plan involves increasing the height of the Tallowa Dam wall by up to 11 metres and installing a pipeline to allow higher rates of water transfer to the Sydney area. Changes to NSW legislation

would be required as a large amount of wilderness would be retracted in the process. Work is scheduled to begin in November 2006.

Lake Yarrunga is at the junction of the Shoalhaven and Kangaroo Rivers, about 30 kilometres from Nowra, and is largely surrounded by Morton National Park. The inundation would extend several kilometres along the Shoalhaven and Kangaroo Rivers and hundreds of metres along Bundanoon and Sandy Creeks, flooding some of the State's most spectacular gorge country. Community consultation has been negligible and environmental impact assessments non-existent.

New legislation before the Victorian Government aims to protect the State's rivers by creating water 'banks', complete with deposits, loans and water trading. According to the ACF, the Water (Resource Management) Bill would establish a river's legal right to water supply, create an environmental water reserve and allow water to be bought for the environment when this reserve was lower than that needed to maintain the health of a river.

Wood-chips

Funding boost for Victorian parks

According to Parks Victoria the Victorian Government's May 2005 budget allocated an extra \$102.9 million over the next six years for Victoria's parks and reserves. The boost includes a \$19 million weed and pest-animal control scheme and \$49.4 million for the repair and replacement of visitor facilities. An undisclosed amount is set aside for the establishment and management of the Great Otway National Park (see Green Pages in *Wild* no 98).


Conservation in Tasmania

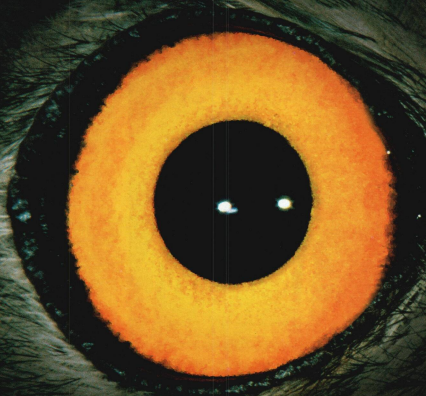
The Tasmanian Land Conservancy (TLC) is a new conservation group that acquires and manages properties rich in biodiversity, protecting the land with a conservation covenant before reselling it. Revenue from this then goes into a revolving fund to purchase other properties. The fledgling group was recently recognised in the *Mercury* as one of Tasmania's top charities. A new 43 hectare property has been donated to the organisation, which is working to secure its first permanent reserve. See www.tasland.org.au for more information.

Dropping poison from the skies

Julie Kirkwood reports that a recent push to introduce aerial baiting using 1080 poison to control wild dogs in north-east Victoria would push the endangered spot-tailed quoll, mainland Australia's largest marsupial carnivore, further towards extinction. Recent research supported by the NSW Government declared that this type of baiting is not a threat to quolls, despite a number of them being killed during trials. The practice has now been reintroduced in NSW.

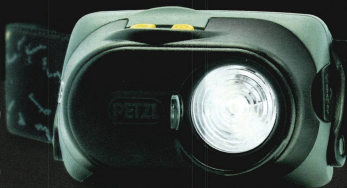
Ensuring an enduring symbol of the Commonwealth Games

TWS reports that the Commonwealth Games emblem, the red-tailed black cockatoo (or karak), is poised to disappear from Victoria unless the Bracks Government acts to protect its key habitat. The Cobboboonie State Forest in south-west Victoria, near Portland, is a key habitat for the cockatoo and many other species. TWS are campaigning to have the area added to the Lower Glenelg National Park; see www.wilderness.org.au for further details. 



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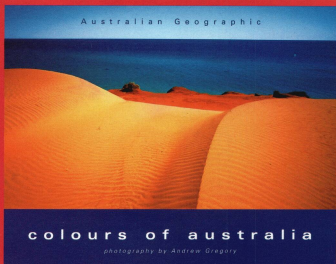
Colours of Australia

by Andrew Gregory (Australian Geographic, 2005, RRP \$54.95, www.australiangeographic.com).

Australia's contrasting landscapes are masterfully captured by Gregory's images. Even familiar places seem inaccessible and remote. You get the feeling that the photographer walked many lonely kilometres and spent hours waiting for just that shot. The occasional four-shot spread showcases tremendous diversity, although it is annoying to have to flick back and forth to match the images with their corresponding captions.

The captions are insightful and informative, apart from an error on the first few pages. *Colours of Australia* is a coffee-table book that impels the reader to get off the couch and into the bush.

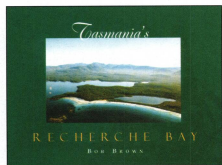
Tim Langford



Tasmania's Recherche Bay

by Bob Brown (Green Institute, 2005, RRP \$17.50, margaret.blakers@bigpond.com).

With only a brief knowledge of the recently located French garden at Recherche Bay, my reading of Bob Brown's short book has considerably expanded my knowledge of



the area. The book is a coffee-table gem, with an important message about the threat of destruction that the area faces through logging. Its beautiful aerial photographs complement the selected historical drawings and quotes from the published diary of the naturalist Jacques-Julien Labillardiere, who visited the area in 1792.

The first half of the book sets the scene by giving a snapshot history of the bay, although I would have preferred to be able to complete 'the journey' without the occasional present-day reference—these would have been better kept towards the end. Despite this minor point, *Tasmania's Recherche Bay* is a delightful way to be educated about the significance and beauty of the bay. The book also encourages people to take action to prevent the sad but imminent destruction of the area.

Zoë Hamilton

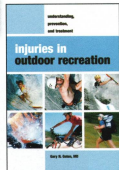
Injuries in Outdoor Recreation

by Gary N Guten (The Globe Pequot Press, 2005, RRP \$34.95, www.woodslane.com.au).

Addressing 40 common outdoors injuries, this book attempts to cover each problem in terms of both diagnosis and intervention. The information in this book is okay for the most part. Although ostensibly a reference book, it isn't designed to be read in this way. It also suffers from some very loose editing; some cited sections are nowhere to be found. There are also a few glaring omissions, for instance glucosamine in the osteoarthritis section, and proprioceptive training and eccentric weights in the relevant rehab sections.

On the positive side, it has some of the best advice I have seen regarding how to approach pain whilst continuing to pursue your activity.

Julian Saunders



Mount Kosciuszko, Perisher & Thredbo

(SutMap, 2005, RRP \$12.95, www.sutmap.com).

This well-produced, full-colour map covers the highest peaks of the Kosciuszko National

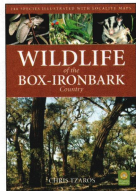
Park. It has a handy 20 metre contour interval and 1:40 000 scale, and would be particularly useful for bushwalks and ski tours in the Thredbo, Perisher and Main Range areas. The map also covers the five glacial lakes and the area from Dead Horse Gap south to Cascade Hut.

Glenn van der Kniff

Wildlife of the Box-Ironbark Country

by Chris Tzaros (CSIRO Publishing, 2005, RRP \$39.95, www.publish.csiro.au).

Covering the dwindling box-ironbark forest that is found north of the Great Dividing Range in central Victoria, this classy produc-



tion details all mammals, birds, reptiles and frogs found in these forests. The book contains descriptions of the animals as well as brief overviews of the reserves and parks where wildlife can be observed and hints for doing so. Many of the reserves will not be familiar to most walkers. It also includes an audio CD of wildlife sounds.

John Chapman

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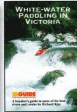
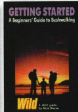
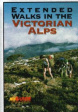
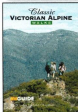
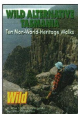
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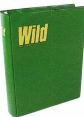


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Andrew Hughes flies his tent at a camp-site halfway across Lake Gordon. (The photo was taken on the 23rd day of the trip across Tasmania described in Wild no 92.) James Hughes

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